St. Francis Seraph Church and Parish

Cincinnati, Ohio

A Historical Sketch

Compiled by

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Commemorating

The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary

of the

Consecration of the Church

and the

Diamond Jubilee of the Parish

1859 - 1934

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Saint Francis of Assisi Church
1859 — 1934

Not all the yield of Afric mines
Could fashion diamonds fair as these
That gem your heaven-holding spires,
Today, with tender memories.

Church of the Poverello, born
When prairie wagons rumbled West,
What epics your worn walls could tell!
What valiant victories attest!

Within your arms ten thousand babes
Were washed and clothed in innocence;
A million sinners kissed your hand
Wet with their tears of penitence.

Oh, you alone can reckon now
Those hidden miracles of grace—
The plighted troths and heart-wrung prayers
Low whispered here before your face.

Into your fabric poured the blood
Of rugged German pioneers:
Their ample boon and widow's mite,
Love, gallant sacrifice and tears.

Of such your sinew and your bone!
(No wonder health and vigor glow
Upon your countenance today
As seventy-five years ago!)

But to your sires you were far more
Than church. You were a prophecy—
The pledge of their perennial hope
For true religious liberty.

God bless you, emblem of our Faith!
Forever may your sturdy spires
Point heavenward - - the testament
Of Francis and his brown-robed Friars!

—*Hyacinth Blocker, O.F.M.*

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ST. FRANCIS SERAPH CHURCH

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Foreword

ST. FRANCIS SERAPH CHURCH celebrates today the seventy-fifth anniversary of its dedication and consecration and the Diamond Jubilee of the foundation of the parish. No more suitable words to express the hallowed meaning of the day could be written than those penned by the great Saint Bernard of Clairvaux:

"Today's festivity, brethren, should be all the more sacred to us, because it is so much our own. For the rest of the solemnities of the Saints we have in common with other churches; this one, however, is so properly our own that it must be celebrated either by us or by nobody. It is ours because it is our church, but ours the more so because it is of ourselves. What holiness could these stones have that we should celebrate their feast? Truly they have holiness, but, without doubt, only because of us. When this church was dedicated to God by the hands of the Bishops, it was done, without doubt, for our sake. Therefore it is necessary that those things be accomplished in us spiritually that took place visibly on these walls. And if you desire to know, they are these: aspersion, inscription, anointing, illumination and benediction. These things the Bishops have done in this visible structure; these Christ, 'being come a High-priest of good things to come,' invisibly performs daily in us."
—Sermon 1 on the Dedication of a Church.

Therefore let the clergy and the parishioners and friends of St. Francis Church rejoice today. It is our feast. May St. Francis church continue to be our "House of God and Gate of Heaven!"

Cincinnati, Ohio, November 25, 1934.

HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS XI

The Site of the First Catholic Church in Cincinnati

WHEN the corner-stone of St. John the Baptist church was laid on March 25, 1845, Bishop Purcell, with a pathos that moved every heart, recalled the trials and conflicts of our ancestors in the faith in Cincinnati. When they sought, he said, to procure a lot whereon to raise a little church, they met with contumely and reproach. They were told to go beyond the corporation line, to seek the brickyards; there they might find a place sufficiently good for them. The followers of a meek and lowly Savior, they bore all with patience and resignation. They went beyond the limits of the city, rented a small square, now known as the Old Graveyard, on Vine street, raised a small frame building, in which they devoutly assembled to adore the God of their fathers. Their numbers increased, and by exemplary lives they removed prejudices; forced bigotry, heartless as it is, to acknowledge their virtues; induced candor to confess freely that their religion was not the horrible thing ignorance or hate would represent it, but a something divine, a religion of truth that rendered men good Christians, good citizens, good patriots. Concluding, Bishop Purcell uttered these beautiful words: "As we passed the old graveyard, site of our first religious place of worship, and the deeply solemn chant arose, the words, 'and the bones that are humbled shall rejoice' came to my mind and I thought there was a stir among the graves. I thought the moldering bones of those, our Catholic ancestors in the Faith, leaped with exultation."

Thirteen years later, on November 7, 1858, Archbishop Purcell laid the corner-stone of another church that was being erected on the very site of this first Catholic church and cemetery. On this occasion it was the brother of the Archbishop, the Very Reverend Edward Purcell, Vicar-General of the Archdiocese, who delivered the English sermon of the festive event. He, too, could not forget the Catholic pioneers of Cincinnati. Referring to them he said: "The bodies of that early band may well be supposed to rejoice in their beds beneath our feet, 'laetabuntur in cubilibus suis,' or under the roof of the new

church to be built over them, while their souls enjoy the beatific vision, and their names shall be cherished in holy memories forever!"

The church to which the Vicar-General referred as the sacred shrine of the mortal remains of Cincinnati's first Catholics was St. Francis Seraph church, which possesses the enviable distinction of occupying the site of that first poor, little church and cathedral of Cincinnati and of being built on the ground consecrated by the relics of the pioneer Catholic settlers of the Queen City of the West. This in itself would guarantee St. Francis church an unforgettable place in history. St. Francis church enjoys another unique privilege. A conventual church attached to the central house of the Franciscan Province of St. John the Baptist, with whose history it is intimately connected, it assumes a place of the greatest moment in the story of the Cincinnati sons of St. Francis. If we would fully appreciate, therefore, the historical significance of St. Francis Seraph church, we must first go back to that humble, little edifice erected by our Catholic forefathers, and to the events leading up to the permanent foundation of the Franciscan Fathers in this part of the country. Both form stories full of human interest.

The First Catholics of Cincinnati

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Cincinnati was not the Catholic city that it is today. Although the children of Mother Church at that time were pathetically few in number, still they desired to have that symbol of their Faith, a church in which the Holy Sacrifice could be offered, their children baptized and instructed, their marriages solemnized and a Mass of Requiem to be celebrated over them before consigned to their last resting place. Already in 1811 the few Catholics of the city attempted to build a house of worship, but without success. A second attempt, which was to meet a similar sad fate, was made in 1817 under the leadership of one of Cincinnati's first Catholics, a loyal son of the church, Michael Scott. A meeting was called to which nine men, seven women and four children responded. The undertaking had again to be abandoned for the time being, but a new impulse was given to the enterprise by Bishop Flaget of Bardstown, Kentucky, when he visited Cincinnati, a part of his vast diocese, during May of the following year. It was as a result of his encouragement that a committee of Catholic men at Cincinnati, seeing themselves unable to procure among themselves the means necessary for the building of a church, sent out an appeal for help to the Catholics of the East, an appeal that appeared in the *Mirror* of Baltimore.

After they had perhaps heard from the East, another meeting was called on Sunday, March 7, 1819, in the home of John White, one of the members of

the committee. The meeting dealt with the organization and building of a church, and appeals for funds were made, as is apparent from the notice inserted in the *Western Spy* on Saturday, March 13th:

To Roman Catholics

The Roman Catholics of Hamilton County are requested to forward to the Treasurer, in the course of the next (should read *this*) and the following month, as large a portion of their subscriptions as they possibly can, as the committee will thereby be enabled to have the church ready for Divine Service by next Easter Sunday.

By order of the Committee,

MICHAEL SCOTT, Sec'y.

Christ Church

The site chosen for the church was on lots one and two in a tract of land adjoining the northern boundary of the city of Cincinnati, which James Findlay had laid out into fifty-two lots, and had denominated the Northern Liberties. The construction of the church did not take much time, Michael Scott, a house-carpenter by profession, preparing the plans; the timber was purchased from William Reilly who lived in the vicinity of Alexandria, Kentucky. The church, a plain structure, measuring fifty-five by thirty feet, was probably completed according to intention for Easter Sunday, 1819, and on that day Mass was said in it for the first time probably by Father Nicholas Young, O.P.

The little congregation, taking advantage of an act passed by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio on February 5, 1819, was incorporated to be known as Christ Church with the following five trustees: Patrick Reilly, John Sherlock, Thomas Dugan, Edward Lynch and Michael Scott. The church, however, was put under the patronage of St. Patrick.

The Choice of the Site

A thorny question that remains to be treated is the selection of the site. Why did these pioneer Catholics of Cincinnati go out of the city limits to build their church when a site within the corporation would have been by far more convenient? Many recent writers of Cincinnati history have solved the question to their satisfaction by saying that a city ordinance forbade the erection of the first Catholic church in the city limits. This, however, is not accepted by Rev. Dr. John H. Lamott, S.T.D., the historian of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, who has investigated the matter thoroughly. He contends that nowhere

is there any evidence of such an ordinance having been passed in Cincinnati. That bigotry did exist in the early days, Dr. Lamott does not pretend to deny. He adduces all the testimony on which the legend is based, not omitting the seemingly certain remarks of Bishop Purcell, made on the occasion of the cornerstone-laying of St. John the Baptist Church, March 25, 1845.

In spite of all this apparently adverse testimony stands the fact that no evidence of such an ordinance having been passed or repealed can be found among the ordinances or minutes of the Council of Cincinnati. According to Dr. Lamott, the reasons prompting the Catholics in the choice of the site were that it was a more central location for the county, since the interest of the people oustide the boundaries of the city were also consulted in the choice; secondly, the fewness of their numbers and their very limited means did not permit them to buy property within the city limits, as this property was high priced. On the other hand they obtained very easy terms from James Findlay, who had advertised that he would sell under "easy terms." As a matter of fact, the congregation agreed to purchase the two lots from Mr. Findlay for $1,200, but on the day of the transfer of the property, they executed a mortgage to James Findlay for $750, a transaction which speaks for itself in reference to the poverty of the Catholics of Cincinnati. One more consideration in refutation of the alleged ordinance is that, when three years later Bishop Fenwick moved the church to a site in the heart of the city, no ordinance was invoked to prevent the transfer.

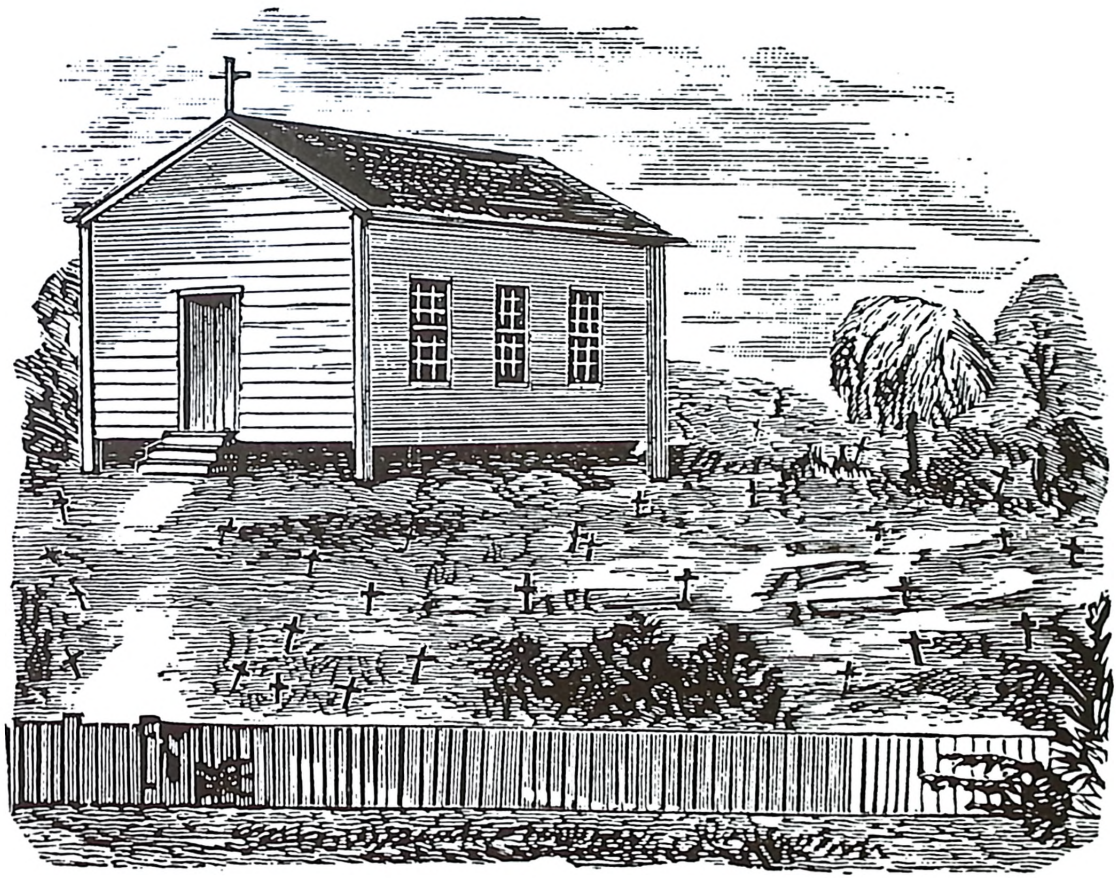
Right Reverend Edward Fenwick, O.P., the First Bishop of Cincinnati

Catholic life in Cincinnati received a powerful impetus when the city was made the seat of a new diocese, June 19, 1821, with Right Reverend Edward Fenwick, O.P., as its first bishop. His diocese was immense in extent, including Michigan and the Northwest Territory. Cincinnati, his episcopal see, was a city of some 10,000 inhabitants, composed of immigrants from almost every part of Christendom.

The "Apostle of Ohio," the title that Bishop Fenwick richly deserves, received episcopal consecration in St. Rose church, Springfield, Kentucky, January 13, 1822. Supplied by his Dominican confreres with a few vestments, linens, four missals, four chalices and a ciborium, and with money collected by the people of St. Rose's, he, with his little party, left Kentucky in horse and wagon. The episcopal party had to swim the Kentucky river, but managed to reach Cincinnati, unexpected though they were, on Saturday evening, March 23, 1822. They partook of supper at the home of the good old Irishman,

Michael Scott, whose home had always furnished hospitality to missionaries on their visits to Cincinnati and had been hallowed in consequence by the celebration of Holy Mass within its walls up to the time of the building of the chapel in the Northern Liberties.

The word was soon passed around among the Catholics that the bishop had come, and before long they assembled to welcome him. Probably on the next morning, which was Sunday, the bishop took possession of his see by celebrating Mass in the little church. In this cathedral, an unfinished frame building, without ceiling or plaster, Bishop Fenwick was installed "with humble ceremony and silent panegyric," as the writer in the *U. S. Catholic Miscellany* of February 24, 1827, so graphically describes it.



CHRIST CHURCH — FIRST CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CINCINNATI

Christ Church is Transferred to Sycamore Street

Bishop Fenwick's first necessity was to provide himself with a home. A small house was rented in the square known as Flat Iron Square, bounded by Lawrence, Ludlow and Third streets. A residence in this part of the city naturally demanded that his cathedral be in the vicinity. Having experienced great difficulty, too, in reaching his "cathedral" because of the impassability of the mud road, he decided on moving the chapel into the city. For this purpose he did not hesitate on July 6, 1822, to buy on credit a lot on the western side of Sycamore street, between Sixth and Seventh, in the very heart of the city, now the site of St. Francis Xavier church. Thither he had the frame church transferred. The building, however, collapsed as it was being drawn along on rollers; and it became necessary to tear it apart, to haul the lumber to its destination on wagons, and to erect another house of worship. The new chapel, with dimensions as same as those of the old one, was finished and services held in it before December 5, 1822. It was used until 1825 when a large and handsome cathedral was built.

First Ordination to the Priesthood in Cincinnati

Before the little church is dismissed from our story, a historic event taking place within its walls must be mentioned. On Holy Saturday, April 6, 1822, Vincent Badin, the brother of Rev. Stephen Badin, was raised to the priesthood by Bishop Fenwick. It was the first priestly ordination in Ohio, as that of his elder brother, Rev. Stephen Badin, had been the first in the United States.

The First Catholic Cemetery in Cincinnati

The removal of the church to Sycamore street was the cause of a schism among the trustees, on which account the bishop had the title to the property at Vine and Liberty street transferred to himself. A new mortgage to secure the $750, which remained unpaid on the lots, was then given to James Findlay on the three lots, Nos. 1, 2, and 3, this last lot having been bought for cemetery purposes from James Findlay by Michael Scott on August 27, 1821. Incidentally we might mention here that St. Francis church occupies lots one and two. After the removal of the church in 1822, all three lots were devoted to cemetery purposes. It was a tract of land fronting one hundred and sixty feet on the present Vine street, and extending one hundred and twenty feet to the west.

Viewing the size of the property, as we can today, it is easy to see that it must have become too small for the burial needs of the Catholics of Cin-

cinnati at a very early date. Already on April 30, 1828, Bishop Fenwick purchased for a cemetery five (4.87) acres of land between the present Clark and Court, Linn and Cutter streets. This cemetery became known as the Catherine Street Cemetery, Catherine being the former name of Cutter Street. At the present time no traces of the cemetery can be seen. Trouble over the property arose because the title was not clear. When the lawsuit was finally settled in favor of Archbishop Purcell in 1858, the year the corner-stone of St. Francis church was laid, it had long ceased to be used for burial purposes. In 1867 the Archbishop sold the property.

The little cemetery at Vine and Liberty streets was abandoned about 1845. It met the fate of most neglected cemeteries, and so the *Catholic Telegraph*, March 6, 1858, was happy to announce: "We have no doubt that the friends of deceased Catholics interred in the Vine street church lot and cemetery will rejoice to learn that a Catholic Church is to cover their remains and protect them from the desecration to which city grave-yards are too often exposed."

II

Events Leading Up to the Foundation of St. Francis Seraph Parish

1. Catholic Growth in Cincinnati

IT IS now necessary to retrace our steps in order to show the rapid growth of Catholicity in Cincinnati, and the causes that led to the church and parish whose history we are trying to relate. Of the 10,283 inhabitants of Cincinnati in 1819, when the first Catholic church was built, Father Fenwick, the future first bishop of Cincinnati, could number about one hundred poor Irish Catholics. The population of the city, however, grew steadily and quickly, and with it also the number of Catholic inhabitants. This latter increase was due to conversions, but, more greatly, to the immense immigration attracted by the growing industries and commerce of the thriving city.

From 1819 up to the organization of St. Francis parish in 1858, sixteen parishes were founded within the present corporation limits. The greater number of these were formed to take care of the vast German Catholic immigration that began to flow into the city from about the year 1830.

German Parishes in Cincinnati

Holy Trinity church, the first German Catholic church in Cincinnati, and the first west of the Alleghanies, was founded in 1834. This first filial church of St. Peter's cathedral, was to become a most fruitful mother-church, surpassing the parent in the number of offspring.

St. Francis Seraph church lies in the lower district of the city. If we wish to trace its origin and filiation, we can do so very easily by dividing this section of Cincinnati into three parts: north, east and west, where we find three direct descendants of Holy Trinity parish, viz., St. Mary's of 1840, St. Philomena's of 1846 and St. Joseph's of 1846. The first filial church of St. Mary's

was St. John the Baptist's, which was rendered necessary in 1844 by the continued influx of German Catholic immigrants to the northern part of Cincinnati. The second filial of St. Mary's was St. Paul church organized in the winter of 1847-1848.

Turning our attention to the eastern section of the city, we find that a growing German Catholic population, which had been attending Holy Trinity church, in 1846 began the organization of St. Philomena church.

Now going to the western part of the city, we find, as a daughter church of Holy Trinity, the parish of St. Joseph, founded in 1846. From it developed St. Michael's in 1847, in a still more westernly section of Cincinnati. The second offspring of St. Joseph's was St. Augustine church, begun in 1852 as an English speaking parish, but failing of support and with a great influx of German Catholic immigration arriving in Cincinnati, the congregation was made over to the German speaking Catholics of the vicinity in 1857. But even these eight parishes, situated in an oblong-shaped area of about three miles from St. Philomena's to St. Michael's, and one mile from Holy Trinity to St. John's were not sufficient, and the formation of another parish, still within the above-mentioned territory, became imperative for the German Catholics living in the northern part of the city.

St. John parish had become the largest congregation of the city and diocese, too large to take care of all its people. A few statistics of the ten years before the founding of St. Francis parish are most enlightening:

	Baptisms	Deaths	Marriages
1849	681	1245*	248
1850	654	511	193
1851	621	267	169
1852	627	394	155
1853	695	307	181
1854	739	531	181
1855	703	399	138
1856	768	291	143
1857	774	403	152
1858	779	468	135
1859	773	413	131

*This was the year when the cholera raged in Cincinnati.

The *Catholic Telegraph* of March 6, 1858, could therefore rightly say: "We are happy to learn that the Franciscan Fathers of St. John's church are to receive an accession to their numbers from the Tyrol in the course of this year. They propose to build a new church which is very much wanted in that part of

the city, and to erect a Gymnasium, or Day School, for youths aspiring to the Ecclesiastical state—to be followed by a Seminary for the training of priests for their Order, probably at Hamilton." Therefore in 1858, as a daughter church of St. John's, St. Francis Seraph parish came into existence. It was to serve as a subsidiary parish church of St. John's.

When its present site was proposed, which is only one square distant from St. John's, many objected that the two churches would be too close to one another. But, as we are told, Father Francis X. Weninger, the famous Jesuit missionary and a close friend of the Tyrolese Franciscans, dispelled all their misgivings by telling them that, no matter where they would build, the people would flock to the new church. His predictions proved true, for St. Francis became a most flourishing parish from its very beginning.

Contemporary Catholic Life in Cincinnati

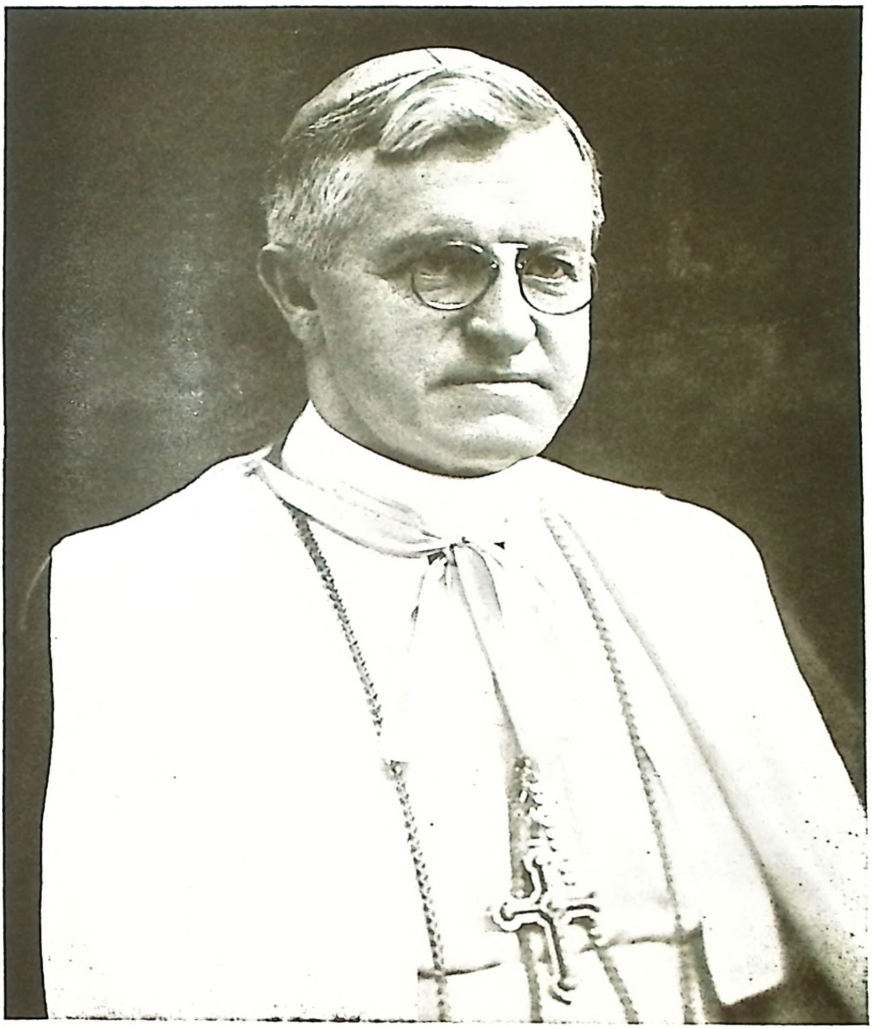
A contemporary account of Cincinnati, of its Catholicity, and of the city's lights and shadows will not be out of place in order to show the staunch faith of these pioneer German Catholics. The word-picture is painted by Professor Maximilian Oertel.

Unfortunately it cannot be given in its entirety and in the original German in Oertel's inimitable style. Writing in the *Katholische Kirchenzeitung* of New York of which he was the editor, he says in the issue of August 28, 1851:

"What shall I say of Cincinnati? With a perfect right it is called the 'Queen City of the West,' as far as beauty, size, business and industries are concerned. Fifty years ago there were not a thousand people living here, and now, according to the census of 1850, there are over 160,000. A large part of the population are Germans. The reader will not expect from us a detailed description of the city. In short, Cincinnati must astonish every stranger; and many a Swabian backwoodsman, who dreamed that all the people here were black or red, and that they ate one another like liver sausages, would open his eyes and mouth when he came to Cincinnati for the first time . . .

"A section of the city is almost completely German, viz., that district above the canal on Sycamore, Main, Walnut, Vine and Race streets, and in the so-called 'Texas' in the West End. There it teems with German faces and one can hear the dialects of Baden, Swabia, Bavaria, Austria, Frankfort, Berlin, Plattdeutsch, and also some Yiddish.

"Most remarkable of all things in Cincinnati, however, are the many beautiful Catholic churches, which fill the Catholic traveler with joy and



MOST REVEREND JOHN T. McNICHOLAS, O.P., S.T.M.
ARCHBISHOP OF CINCINNATI

exultation, while all the Forty-eighters, beerocrats and radical rascals have a fit at their sight, or at least the shivers, and try to drown their vexation over the progress of the detestable Jesuitism in beer or Catawba wine . . .

"The beautiful German churches were built from German money, were founded quickly one after the other, and show clearly what Catholic zeal can do. I say freely: in no city of the Union have I observed such deep Catholicity, so much zeal for the glory of God, such beautiful harmony among our German brethren of the Faith, as in Cincinnati . . . I do not want to flatter the Catholics of Cincinnati, but for the sake of truth and for the encouragement of others I repeat: Nowhere have I found such fervour as in Cincinnati."

2. The Coming of the Franciscans to Cincinnati

The Franciscan Province of St. John the Baptist would not have come into existence had it not been for the German immigration into Cincinnati, and we can add immediately, St. Francis Seraph parish, organized for the German Catholics of Cincinnati, would not have enjoyed the prominent place that it did and still does, had it not been for the Province. The church, when it was built, was to be a sign of the permanent stay of the Franciscans in the United States, and attached later on to the central house of the Province, it possesses a prominence that no other church under the care of the Cincinnati friars enjoys.

The Tyrolese friars certainly had no mean conception of its important place in the city, province and even country, and although we cannot subscribe completely to all the claims of the writer in the *Katholische Kirchenzeitung* of November 10, 1859, while the church was nearing completion, still his poetical but somewhat confused thoughts show the high place that St. Francis church had in the eyes of the founders of the Province. The writer, probably Father Archangelus Gstir, O.F.M., says: "There are so many similar historical features of this church that bind it with the first years of the holy Founder of the Order, St. Francis, that instinctively make us think of it as a St. Mary of the Portiuncula in America.

"For just as the renowned image of the crucified Christ, preserved in the ancient and delapidated church of St. Damian that stood in the vicinity of Assisi, spoke to St. Francis while praying before it: 'Go, Francis, and repair My house that has fallen into ruins;' so on this spot there stood the first little Catholic church that has crumbled away and the first Catholic cross in the city. (The text has *state*, but the similarity of the German words could easily

account for a typographical error.) And as that favorite church of St. Francis became the custodian of the remains of the early Catholics of that part of Italy, so St. Francis church in Cincinnati is also the guardian of the venerable relics of the first Catholics of this vicinity, whose bones rest under the sanctuary. Moreover, as the church of Portiuncula was destined to be 'the mother and head of the little band of Friars Minor,' as St. Bonaventure writes, so St. Francis church has an exactly similar destiny for North America." They did not even hesitate to call it the first Order church, or Franciscan conventual church, in America; which is probably true if we take into consideration only those independent Franciscan foundations which came into existence in the United States during the course of the past century. But we are anticipating too much, and we must again retrace our steps.

Due to the great tide of German immigration that began to come to Cincinnati about the year 1830, Bishop Purcell was in sore need of German speaking priests to take charge of this new addition to his flock. On one of his frequent visits to Europe, the bishop obtained in 1839 the first Franciscan to come to Cincinnati, Father Francis Louis Huber of the Bavarian Province. Finding it impossible to secure further help from the Bavarian Franciscans, the bishop turned to another German speaking province, that of St. Leopold in the Tyrol, Austria. Here he was more successful.

The First Tyrolese Franciscans

Yielding to Bishop Purcell's repeated and urgent requests, the superiors of the Province permitted Father William Unterthiener, O.F.M. to go to America. Arriving in Cincinnati in 1844, he was placed for the time being as assistant to Father Huber, who in the meantime had become pastor of Holy Trinity church. The arrangement proved unsatisfactory, and after a short time Father William was made pastor of St. John the Baptist church, a few months after its dedication on November 1, 1845.

During the next twelve years, from 1846-1858, due to the petitions of Father William and his successors in the office of superior of the American mission, nine fathers, Edmund Etschmann, Nicholas Wachter, Otto Jair, Sigismund Koch, Accursius Gaertner, Pirmin Eberhard, Anselm Koch, David Widmann, Dennis Abarth, and three lay brothers came from the Tyrol.

With this increase in numbers the Fathers were able to extend their activities. Besides St. John church in Cincinnati, they assumed charge of the parishes of St. Stephen, Hamilton, Ohio, in 1848; of St. Peter, now St. Bonaventure, Cincinnati, in 1849; of St. Boniface, Louisville, Kentucky, in 1849;

MOST REVEREND JOSEPH H. ALBERS, D.D., J.C.D.
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF CINCINNATI

of St. Clement, St. Bernard, Ohio, in 1850. The Fathers also served during these years as pastors at Pomeroy, Pine Grove and Portsmouth, Ohio; Aurora, Indiana; several other places, besides the above-mentioned in Cincinnati; and for a few years at Wartburg, Tennessee.

Difficulties of the Friars in America

With their small number divided among so many places, and with more bishops asking them for help, it was naturally impossible to do justice to all the demands made upon them. They made continuous appeals for more priests to their superiors at home, who, for the most part, did all that they could. The incessant pleas for help vexed the superiors, especially those not so sympathetic towards the mission in America; but what they considered indefensible on the part of the friars in America was that they did not observe all the rules of conventual life that they were able to follow at home in their well-manned convents. Another serious objection raised by the authorities in the Tyrol was that the friars in America did not make sufficient effort to introduce the Franciscan Order officially in the United States by founding a regularly constituted convent.

One can sympathize with both parties. The zeal for the Order and conventual life on the part of the provincial superiors was most admirable. As they saw it, they were in the right. With the exception of the little monastery of St. Clement, St. Bernard, Ohio, the friars in America had no house which could be called a convent of their own; and St. Clement's was too small to be considered. On the other hand, they did make serious efforts to satisfy their superiors at home in regard to the observance of conventual life, but the pressing demands made on them by parochial work, and the fewness of their numbers in all the parishes that they served, made it impossible to observe all the details. To the friars in America, moreover, taxed to the utmost with work among the faithful—the amount of which their provincial superiors could never fully fathom, because in the home province they did relatively little parish work—it seemed more logical to sacrifice some accidental features of conventual life rather than let the more important work of saving souls suffer.

The Crisis

Matters reached a critical point in 1857, when the Tyrolese Provincial, Father John Capistran Sojer, O.F.M., and his Board of Definitors, meeting in Chapter, decreed the suppression of the mission in America and the recall of the missionaries to the home province. The news caused great consternation to the friars in the United States.

They had no desire to abandon their posts, for they had grown to love their work among the faithful in America. Had the decree come ten years earlier, they would have been quite content to return to the midst of their brethren in their beautiful Tyrol. For at first they thought that their stay in America would be only temporary, and several expressly stated that, after laboring here a number of years, they intended to return home. Now, however, they strenuously wished to remain, and to make it possible, they decided to make the necessary move, namely, to make their own independent foundation of the Order in the United States. This became their determination the more as it became increasingly more difficult to obtain recruits from home.

The Solution of the Difficulties

In this plan the Fathers received the full support and encouragement of Archbishop Purcell. He had wanted the friars to found a monastery of the Order in Cincinnati, and, to obtain the necessary permission, entered into negotiations with the Minister General of the Order at Rome. With the monastery founded, one of the principal objections of the superiors in the Tyrol would have been obviated. But before the negotiations could be brought to a successful close there came the decree of the suppression of the mission in America. But it only served to strengthen the determination of the friars here to become independent of the home province. Negotiations to this purpose were hastened. Very fortunately the Cincinnati Franciscans received the encouragement of the Minister General, the Most Reverend Bernardino a Montefranco, in their determination.

First the Friars had to make some plan to secure their future existence, for after their separation from the Tyrolese province, they had no right to hope for a great amount of assistance from that source. To provide for their needs they decided to start a college from which they could recruit vocations for their American missions. Archbishop Purcell showed every favor to the Fathers giving them permission to build the college, and transferring in perpetuity the property at Vine and Liberty streets, Cincinnati, the site, as we have heard, of the first Catholic church in the city, and the first Catholic cemetery, now quite abandoned. Upon this plot of ground they were to build a monastery, a college and a church to be dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi.

The archbishop then, in 1858, petitioned the provincial at Innsbruck, Tyrol, as well as the Minister General at Rome, for the erection of a custody, the first step in the foundation of an independent province of the Franciscan Order. All conditions being satisfactory, and the approbation of Pope Pius IX having been obtained on December 17, 1858, the custody was erected by a

decree of the Minister General, Bernardino a Montefranco on February 19, 1859. The custody was given the name of St. John the Baptist in honor of Archbishop John B. Purcell, the great benefactor of the friars. By the same decree of the Minister General, Father Otto Jair, O. F. M., the soul of the entire historic move, was appointed first custos.

St. Francis Gymnasium

Having cleared so much ground, we are now impatient to begin the story of St. Francis church and parish. Pursuing the chronological order, however, we must first turn our attention for a few moments to an institution, which, though in no way directly connected with the parish, nevertheless was in its midst for many years. A few words are necessary, too, to complete the brief sketch on the founding and development of the Franciscan custody and later, province of Cincinnati. We have already heard of the grandiose plan of the Fathers to erect a group of buildings that would undeniably be a genuine Franciscan establishment, in which the conventual life could be observed in all its details, and which would take care of the perpetuation of the foundation.

Quite logically the Fathers first provided for the latter need. Therefore, even before the custody was officially erected, they opened a gymnasium, or college for the education of young men. On October 4, 1858, after a Solemn High Mass in St. John church, St. Francis Gymnasium was inaugurated with an attendance of thirty students. The gymnasium was originally not intended exclusively as a preparatory school for candidates to the priesthood, but was quite general in scope. Its object was twofold: to provide the boys of German Catholic families with an opportunity to acquire a higher education, and to give the young men, who felt a vocation to the priesthood and the Order, the necessary scientific and religious training.

Classes were first held in a rented house on Vine street, opposite St. Francis Monastery. In 1861, after the completion of St. Francis parish school, classes were transferred to it, a part of the building being set aside for the purpose. A three-story building was erected in 1867 on Republic street, and finally, in 1893, a larger and more commodious building was constructed on the site. In 1924 the college was removed to its present beautiful location at Mt. Healthy near Cincinnati.

The history of the college, which has given some five hundred priests to the Church, is quite out of place here. But the presence of the college and the

students until a few years ago in the immediate vicinity of St. Francis church and monastery has left an indelible impression on the parish.

ST. FRANCIS GYMNASIUM — ERECTED IN 1867

III

St. Francis Church

NEXT in line in the great project was the building of a church, somewhat worthy of the Divine Presence it was the shelter, the venerable site on which it was to be built, and the position it was to hold in the custody and subsequently, Franciscan province. St. Francis Seraph church, however, is principally known as a parish church. It is under that aspect, therefore, that it must be considered.

A parish church is a minature of that divine and largest of all institutions, the Church. Just as the Universal Church was founded by Jesus Christ to save the souls of all men, so every parish is a small unit of that vast body and founded to help realize that end. How the parish succeeds is its real history, the kind of history one would like to know. But since that is veiled from us and known only to the all-wise God, we must for the present be satisfied with the external. But that is sufficient to raise our minds to thoughts higher than the material world, for it gives us glimpses of noble service and sacrifice, piety and zeal on the part of both clergy and parishioners that spiritually stimulate us.

Events of the year 1858 moved rapidly. Since the property given to the Franciscan Fathers by Archbishop Purcell was not sufficient, Father Otto Jair, O. F. M. acquired the adjoining land which had belonged to the deceased physician, Dr. Sebastian Huber. It did not take long to commence the necessary excavating work for the new church. Before that could be done, however, provisions had to be made for the bodies of the early Catholics buried on part of the site. Therefore the *Catholic Telegraph* of September 25, 1858 made this important announcement: "We beg to call once more the attention of the friends and relatives of the deceased Catholics whose remains are interred in the old cemetery on Vine street, Cincinnati, to the fact so gratifying to them, which we have already announced, viz: that these venerated remains, if it so pleases the friends, will be placed in a crypt over which the new Catholic Church of St. Francis will be erected. It is the best safe regard for the sacredness of

those remains when they are protected by the sacred edifice in which the Holy Sacrifice and the prayers of the faithful will be henceforth offered for the repose of the souls which were once enshrined therein.

"Should any prefer to have them removed to St. Joseph's or any other Catholic cemetery, every facility for this purpose shall be afforded them. The corner-stone of the new church will be placed, God willing, on the first Sunday of November, but nothing further done but to prepare the materials for the next spring."

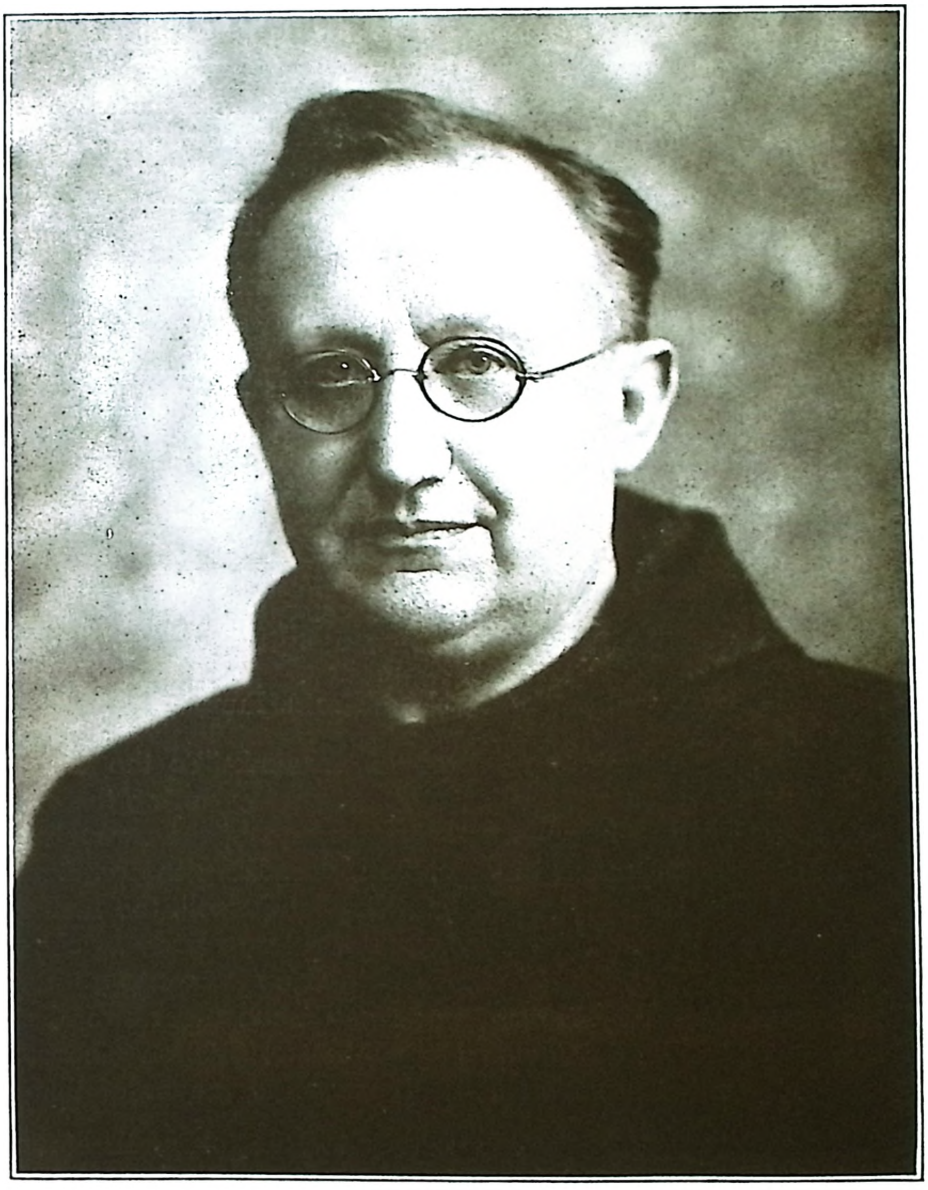
The Corner-Stone Laying, November 7, 1858

As announced, the corner-stone was laid on Sunday afternoon, November 7, 1858. It was a great event in the Catholic life of Cincinnati, and the *Wahrheitsfreund* tells us that, although there had been many celebrations in Cincinnati on similar occasions, that at the corner-stone laying of St. Francis church was extraordinary, and this in spite of the inclement weather that would have been sufficient cause to keep all away.

A lengthy parade preceded the ceremonies. With a fine spirit of Catholic solidarity numerous societies of other parishes took part in it. Among them were the St. Aloysius Orphan Society, the St. Boniface Young Men Society, the St. Pius Men Society, St. Paul Society, St. Clement Society, St. Louis Society, St. Joseph Society, St. Aloysius Young Men Society, St. Charles Borromeo Society, St. Willibrord Society, St. Augustine Society and several others. Some six to eight bands furnished the marchers, all wearing the distinctive badges of their organizations, with music, while the marshals of the parade rode proudly on their horses.

The parade formed at St. Paul church, and from there marched to St. John's in order to meet the Archbishop and his large retinue of clergy who had assembled there. About 3:30 the Archbishop, clothed in pontifical vestments, arrived on the site. An immense crowd of people was there to greet him. The cemetery, Vine, Liberty and Bremen streets, all the roofs and porches of the neighborhood were thronged with spectators, the number of whom, according to experienced observers, amounted to at least 20,000 persons. The reporter of the celebration does not hesitate to say, certainly not without a great amount of local patriotism, that only the corner-stone laying of the new cathedral at New York, which had taken place on August 15 of the same year, 1858, surpassed the Cincinnati event in magnitude.

The last of the parade, the Archbishop and his attendant clergy, having



THE VERY REV. MAURICE RIPPERGER, O.F.M.
PROVINCIAL
PASTOR OF ST. FRANCIS CHURCH, 1921-1933

come to a stop on the site where the stone was to be placed, the ceremonies proceeded. Into the copper receptacle of the corner-stone, a gift of Mr. Henry Gehrs who made it, the following document was placed:

A. M. D. G.
Septimo. Idus. Novembris. A. D. Millesimo.
Octingentesimo. Quinquagesimo. Octavo.
Dominica. Infra. Octavam. O. O. Sanctorum.
Tempore. Jubilaei.
Lapis. Hic. Primarius.
Novae. Ecclesiae. S. P. Francisci. Seraph.
Ritu. Pontificali. Solemniter. Positus. Est.
Cincinnati.
A. Reverendissimo. D. D. Joanne. Bapt. Purcell.
Civitatis. Ac. Dioecesis. Hujus. Primo.
Archiepiscopo.
Assistenti. Numeroso. Cleri. Et. Congregationum.
Catholicarum. Coetu. Et. Immenso. Fidelium.
Concursu. Sub. Victorioso. Pontificatu.
Pii. Noni.
Successoris S. Petri.
Jacobo. Buchannan.
Statuum. Horum. Foederatorum.
Praeside.
Salomone. Chase.
Statum. Ohio. Regente. Et.
N. W. Thomas.
Hujus. Urbis. Summo. Magistratu. Fungente.

Into English the document might be translated: "To the Greater Honor and Glory of God. On November 7, 1858, the Sunday during the octave of All Saints, at the time of the Jubilee, this corner-stone of the new church of our holy Father St. Francis Seraph in Cincinnati, according to pontifical rite, was solemnly laid by the Most Reverend John Baptist Purcell, the first archbishop of this city and diocese with the assistance of a large body of clergy, and in the presence of numerous Catholic societies and an immense gathering of the faithful, during the glorious pontificate of Pius IX, successor of St. Peter; James Buchanan being President of these United States, Salmon Chase, the Governor of the State of Ohio, and N. W. Thomas the mayor of this city."

Enclosed in the stone was also a historical sketch of the foundation of the new church, in which are related the efforts of the Tyrolese mission in America and its various vicissitudes up to that day. Emphasis was especially placed upon the fact that this new church together with the gymnasium and monastery, all under the patronage of St. Francis of Assisi, would have, according to the words of Archbishop Purcell, the beautiful task of guarding the

remains of the first Catholics of Cincinnati and vicinity, just as it is the task of the brethren of the same St. Francis to keep watch over the relics of our Faith in the Holy Land; and that the sons of the Seraphic Saint had, after long and many, and, as it appeared, hopeless efforts obtained in the foundation of this church just as secure a cradle in America as they had found in the sacred lands of the Orient.

Several holy pictures, copies of the Cincinnati newspapers, both Catholic and secular, views and plans of the city of Cincinnati of 1809 and 1854, and various religious articles were also inserted in the corner-stone.

The festive sermon in German was preached by the Rev. P. Kroeger, pastor of Holy Trinity church, while the Very Rev. Edward Purcell, the vicar-general of the archdiocese and brother of the Archbishop, followed him in an English address. In a happy vein he marked the contrast between 1817, when nine Catholic men, seven Catholic women and four Catholic children, all that responded to the call, met at old Papa Scott's to take measures on the faith of the "encouraging prospects their numbers now afforded to build a church," and the flourishing Catholic life of Cincinnati in 1858, adding the words that have already been quoted: "The bodies of that early band may well be supposed to rejoice in their beds beneath our feet, "laetabuntur in cubilibus suis,' or under the roof of the new church to be built over them, while their souls enjoy the beatific vision, and their names shall be cherished in holy memories forever!"

After the pontifical blessing, given by the Archbishop, and prayers for the dead, the crowd dispersed. All that could find entrance then assembled in St. John church for Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament.

On the same day the Archbishop issued his express approval for the entire project that had been begun so auspiciously.

The Dedication and Consecration of St. Francis Church December 18, 1859

In the course of the year 1859 the building proceeded. In its issue of Sept. 15, 1859, the *Wahrheitsfreund* announced that workmen were putting on the slate roof, and that the plasterers were soon to commence in the interior of the church. By October 6 the roof was finished and the towers nearing completion. The construction of the building excited the attention of the entire city. Every day hundreds visited the site to see how much progress had been made. In the Catholics it inspired such a longing for a speedy completion

that, when in late summer, on account of lack of workmen, construction lagged, expressions of impatience were heard on every side, because it was feared that the church would not be finished before the end of the year.

Nevertheless the announcement, made in the *Wahrheitsfreund* of November 17, 1859, that the beautiful new St. Francis church would be dedicated in December, proved true. When the day, December 18, was finally determined upon as the day of dedication, and so much remained to be finished and so much litter to be removed, the spectators became industrious workers. Young and old, big and little, men and women, even boys and girls, helped the workmen until late into the night in order to have everything in readiness. It was 11:00 P.M., the night before the dedication before they went to rest, satisfied that all was in proper condition for the next day.

Description of the Building

The edifice about to be dedicated to the service of God was a building in pleasing Romanesque style, 139 feet long, 60 feet wide across the single nave, and 70 feet in width across the sanctuary part, giving exteriorily the impression as if the church had small transepts. Well proportioned twin towers, reaching a height of 140 feet to the cross, graced the technically west front. The three round-arched portals of the front were 12 feet high and 6 feet wide. A niche above the central door was destined for a statue of St. Francis. The interior was able to hold some two hundred pews with a seating capacity for one thousand persons.

The semi-circular sanctuary was 26 feet deep, 26 feet wide and 45 feet high. Flanking it on both sides were sacristies; on the second level were oratories looking out upon the sanctuary.

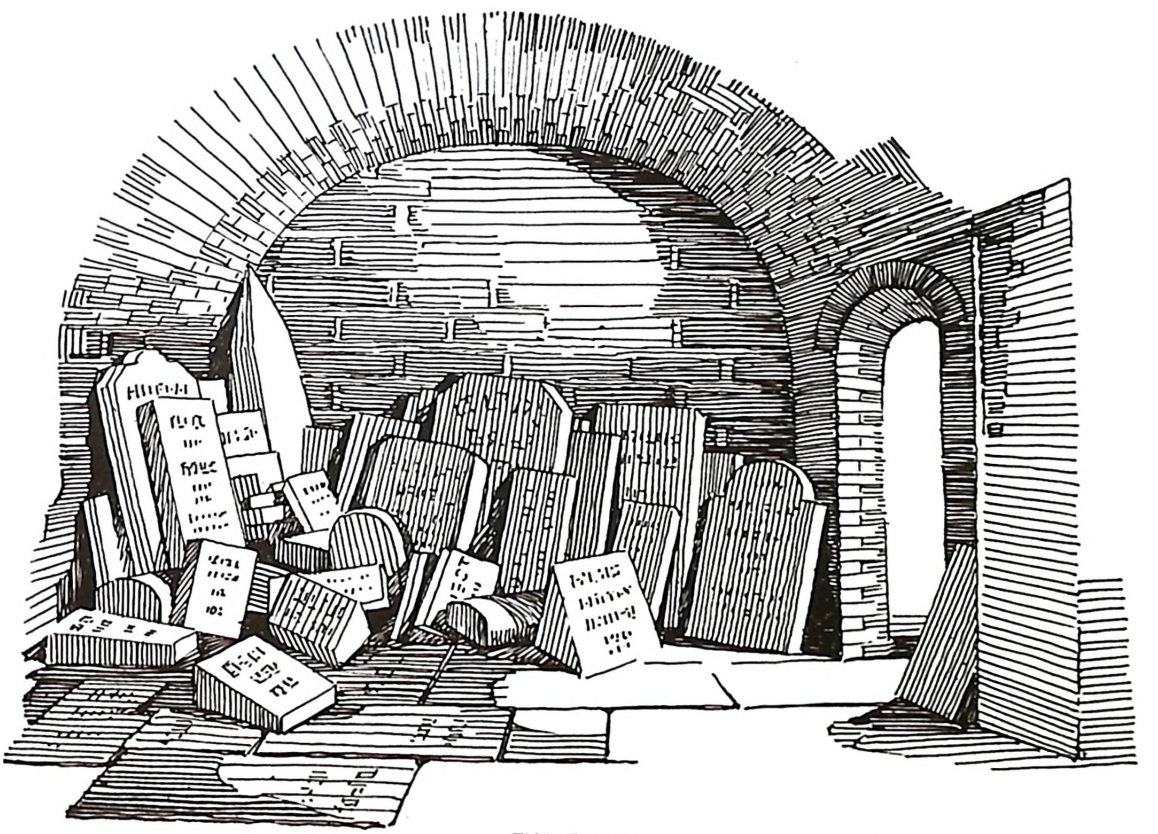
In their souvenir book of St. Francis parish, published exactly fifty years ago, when the church celebrated its Silver Jubilee, Fathers Bonaventure Hammer, O.F.M. and Maximilian Schaefer, O.F.M., the joint authors, are enthusiastic in their praise of the men who participated in the construction of the building. Many of these business men must have still been living then, but even today their names deserve to be mentioned in a history of the parish. Herman Meiners supplied the stone masonry, Bernard Moeller and Co. the brick, and Finnigan and Gehrs the sandstone work. The cabinet and carpenter work was done by Joseph Ellick; mortar and plastering by I. F. Taylor; the slate roof and cornice by L. Fay; the painting by Albert Boehmer, the iron work by Lambert Heeman. The interior painting *al fresco* of the church was executed by Becker, while the glass windows were the production of Burgand. General

superintendent of the building was that experienced master of construction work and faithful worker for the church, John Bast.

James W. McLaughlin was the architect. He made his plans from the sketch prepared by a certain Father Bertrand, a member of the Tyrolese Franciscan Province. It is most enlightening to note that the architect, when he drew the plans of St. Francis church, was only twenty-four years old. He was one of Cincinnati's foremost men of his profession, and among the buildings still remaining in the city, or still in fresh memory are the old Y. M. C. A. building, the former headquarters of the Union Gas and Electric Co., the old Carew building, the former Courthouse, the Public Library, Art Museum and Art School, and many other public, business and private buildings.

The Crypt

To provide a worthy resting place for the bodies taken up from the old cemetery two compartments of the crypt built under the sanctuary of the church were set aside. These two compartments, altogether there are four,



THE CRYPT

(two being used for other purposes) are each 24 feet long, 12 feet wide and 9 feet high from the floor to the highest point of their vaulted ceilings. Long before the church had been completed, the remains of those bodies that had not been claimed by friends or relatives were gathered and re-interred in their new resting place.

A visit to this venerable spot fills those fortunate enough to be admitted with feelings of deepest reverence akin to that felt when visiting the catacombs, the burial place of the early Christians. Of the two compartments the one to the west, or towards Republic street, seems to contain the larger number of bodies, for it has by far the greater number of tombstones. The floor is almost completely paved with them, while quite a large number are piled up in one corner. Due to present conditions, many of the stones being placed face downwards, all the inscriptions cannot be read. The legible ones, however, reveal almost exclusively Irish names. We give here two of the inscriptions, probably the oldest and the latest of those preserved in the crypt.

SACRED
to the memory of
SAMUEL KEHOE
who departed this life
July 1st A.D. 1822:
aged twenty-nine years
He was a native of the
County of Wexford
IRELAND
Lord have mercy on his soul

JOHN S.
Son of John S. &
E. A. Ford
Died Sept. 3, 1836:
Aged 2 years
7 months and
7 days

It will not be commonplace to express the hope that the faithful worshipping in St. Francis church that treasures the earthly remains of the first Catholics of Cincinnati will never cease to pray for the eternal peace of their souls.

The Celebration, December 18, 1859

To return now to the events of the historic day. December 18, the fourth Sunday of Advent, 1859, dawned cold and raw. The streets were almost impassable on account of the rain, snow and mire. Nevertheless, early in the morning the Catholics made their way in throngs to the church, closed for the time during the rite of consecration. The crowd became so great during the three hours that the sacred ceremonies lasted, that the mounted marshals were no longer able to keep it in check in order to make room for the arriving

paraders. They were finally obliged to call in the assistance of the police with whose aid the immense crowd was kept in order.

The Parade

Just as when the corner-stone of the church was laid, so, too, on this occasion, the men and young men societies took part in a long parade. In spite of the inclement weather sixteen societies gathered at their respective parish churches, from where they went to St. Mary church on Thirteenth street, the rallying and starting point of the parade. In military precision, with the stirring music of nine bands they made a wide circuit of the city, arriving at last at Liberty and Vine streets. Seven thousand, including the other people, were able to make their way into the church, still devoid on that day of pews.

The parade deserves a description. It was made up of three divisions with Anton Schaefer as grand marshal. The first division, under assistant marshal Clement Stammbusch, was composed of St. Aloysius Orphan Society, the Catholic Benevolent Society, St. Boniface Young Men Society and St. Pius Men Society.

Then came the second division with Frank Hoeffer as assistant marshal. Under his leadership there marched St. John Society of St. Mary church, St. John and St. Louis Societies of St. John church, St. Clement Society, St. Bernard Society, St. Aloysius Young Men Society, St. Joseph Society, and St. Boniface School-Aid Society.

The final and third division of which Joseph Niehaus was the assistant marshal consisted of St. Charles Borromeo Society, St. Paul Society, St. Willibrord Society, St. Bernard Young Men Society, and St. Augustine Society.

The mentioning of all these names may prove tiresome, but much of the possible boredom arising from it will be dissipated if one takes the participation of all these societies—as it really was—as an edifying and characteristic demonstration of cooperation, harmony and unity, and a robustness of faith that existed among all the German Catholic parishes of Cincinnati at that time.

The Pontifical High Mass

Since St. Francis' was to be a Franciscan conventual church in perpetuity, Archbishop Purcell permitted the church to be solemnly consecrated immediately, instead of merely dedicated, as was custom in America. The consecrating prelate was the Right Reverend James F. Wood, coadjutor bishop of Phila-

delphia, who happened to be in the city. Archbishop Purcell, now far advanced in years, delegated his good friend, Bishop Wood, to perform the lengthy ceremony which would have taxed his strength severely, while he himself was occupied on the same day with the consecration of the high altar of St. Francis de Sales church, Walnut Hills.

It must have been a source of keen satisfaction for Bishop Wood to consecrate the church which was to signify the permanency and the stability of the new Franciscan Custody in America, for, as a student of the Propaganda College in Rome, he had labored so diligently, as agent of Bishop Purcell, to obtain Franciscan priests to minister to the spiritual wants of the German speaking Catholics of Bishop Purcell's diocese of Cincinnati.

Bishop Wood began the solemn ceremonies of consecration Sunday morning at 7:00 o'clock, the doors of the church remaining closed, according to the rules of the ceremonial, until the rites were finished. After the immense crowd, mentioned above, was permitted to enter the newly consecrated church, Bishop Wood celebrated Pontifical High Mass. Present at the solemn functions was Bishop Luers of Fort Wayne, Indiana, sixteen priests, and a choir of altar boys composed of the students of the recently founded gymnasium.

The assistants to the pontificating bishop were the Rev. Clement Hammer of St. Mary church, as arch-priest; the Rev. Peter Tschieder, S.J. of St. Xavier church as deacon; and the Rev. August Toebbe, the future bishop of Covington, then of St. Philomena church, as subdeacon; the Rev. Engelbert Stehle of St. Joseph church was the master of ceremonies. Assistants to Bishop Luers were the Rev. Peter Kroeger of Holy Trinity's and the Rev. Bernard Hengehold of St. Augustine church.

Present in the sanctuary were also the Rev. John T. Kuhlmann, S.J., the Rev. Anthony Berman of St. Mary's, and the following Franciscan Fathers: the Very Reverend Custos Otto Jair, O.F.M., Edmund Etschmann, O.F.M., Nicholas Wachter, O.F.M., Archangelus Gstir, O.F.M., Francis de Hieronymo Holzer, O.F.M., Francis de Paul Kolb, O.F.M., and Anselm Koch, O.F.M.

After the mass Bishop Wood gave a sermon in English. The principal speaker of the day, however, was the renowned missionary, the Rev. Francis X. Weninger, S.J., who, long before the celebration, had reserved for himself the right to give expression on this day to his profound veneration for St. Francis of Assisi, a privilege which the friars were only too glad to give to him, their warm friend. He preached not only at the morning services, but also at

ARCHBISHOP
JOHN B. PURCELL
WHO GAVE THE PROPERTY AT
LIBERTY AND VINE STREETS
TO THE
FRANCISCANS

BISHOP JAMES F. WOOD
OF PHILADELPHIA
WHO CONSECRATED
ST. FRANCIS CHURCH
DECEMBER 18, 1859

the Pontifical Vespers in the afternoon, and at the conclusion he himself directed his own imposing *Te Deum* with full orchestral accompaniment.

St. Francis Monastery

The second unit of the great project having been successfully completed, the third would have been begun immediately but for the winter weather which held up all construction work. In the meantime the community of three fathers, one cleric, two lay brothers and two students occupied a delapidated house next to the church on Republic street. The spring and summer of the following year, 1860, however, saw the building of the convent or monastery, as it is called, energetically pursued. It was erected on the northern end of the church, with the front facing Vine street. A simple building of three stories without any pretense to architectural charm, typically Franciscan therefore in spirit, it served the need of the community for almost fifty years.

October 4, 1860, the feast of St. Francis celebrated for the first time in the church named in his honor, was a day of double celebration, both of historic moment: dedication of the new monastery, and the first investiture in the Custody, when six novices were clothed with the brown habit of St. Francis, five of the six being the first fruits of the gymnasium.

Archbishop Purcell celebrated a Pontifical High Mass with the venerable Father Joseph Ferneding, the vicar-general as arch-priest, and Fathers Edmund Etschmann, O.F.M. and Nicholas Wachter, O.F.M., as deacon and subdeacon respectively.

Above the richly decorated high altar, besides the picture of St. Francis appeared the inscriptions: "Behold, Lord, we have left all and have followed Thee;" and "St. Francis, obtain grace for thy first sons." Father Archangelus preached the festive sermon. After the mass the Archbishop spoke a few words, whereupon followed the investiture of the candidates performed by the Custos, Father Otto Jair. The services were concluded with a touching and stirring address by the Custos, benediction of the Blessed Sacrament given by His Grace, and the *Te Deum.*

After the ceremonies in church the new monastery was blessed by the Archbishop and the cloister inaugurated. It is not hard to picture what the thoughts of the friars must have been; now they had their conventual church; now they possessed their first convent in which they could follow all the regulations and spirit of monastic life; now they had recruits from the New World to help them carry on their work among the faithful and to assure the

establishment of the Order in America.

This first monastery of St. Francis witnessed many important events. Eventually it became the central house of the Cincinnati Franciscans, it was a house of study for the clerics aspiring to the priesthood, the home of the professors of the gymnasium or college, and the residence of the parish clergy.

Additions and alterations were made in the course of its existence. It was finally completely torn down in 1906 to make way for the present building.

St. Francis School

St. Francis church being destined to serve also as a parochial church, a school for the children of the parish was the next necessity. Therefore in the autumn of 1860 the construction of a large school building was begun. It was located on a site on Vine street opposite the church. The plot of ground, formerly known as Huber's Garden, extended 19 feet on Liberty street, 175 feet on Vine street, 200 feet on Huber street, then diagonally back to Liberty street, forming thus a triangle. The northern part of the property, on which the Huber residence stood, was later disposed of by sale.

The school building was 98 feet long, 42 feet wide, with a 44 by 28 foot wide annex. The two lower floors contained class rooms, while a large hall occupied the entire third floor. This hall was originally used as a chapel for the school children, and later as a meeting place for the numerous societies. In the annex rooms were provided for the students of the gymnasium, as we have already heard.

The building was finished and ready for occupancy at the opening of the school term, 1861. The dedication took place on Sunday afternoon, September 2, 1861. The Rev. Joseph Ferneding, V.G., officiated, the Very Reverend Custos Otto Jair preached, while the parish choir under the direction of Professor F. W. Rauch, the first organist of St. Francis church and instructor of music at the Catholic Institute of Cincinnati, sang appropriate songs. The next day the new school was opened to the children.

Even before the school was built, a unique plan to make the school of St. Francis congregation and that of its mother parish, St. John's, interparochial was made by the two parishes. Incidentally there were some 1,200 school children belonging to the two parishes in 1860. On June 24, 1860, an open meeting of the two parishes was held in St. John school in order to adopt measures that would unite the schools of both parishes into one. The two congregations

appointed a committee of three under the presidency of Father Otto Jair to draw up tentative plans. The committee, of which Mr. Henry A. Rattermann was secretary, met on June 27 and adopted the following measures.

After insisting that it was to the interest of both congregations that harmony should prevail among them, the following measures were agreed upon: (1) The congregation of St. John will give their school rooms in good repair to the use of both congregations, in return for which the congregation of St. Francis will erect or furnish ample school room in the neighborhood of their church for the equal use of both congregations. (2) The children of both congregations shall be entitled to access to these schools, viz: the boys to the school of St. Francis and the girls to the school of St. John parish. (3) The trustees of both congregations shall also be trustees of these schools, and have equal power to ordain or adopt such measures as they deem beneficent to the welfare of the same as they have in their respective churches, subject to ecclesiastical authority. (4) The salaries of the respective teachers, as also the income from the school money, shall be divided by both congregations into equal parts.

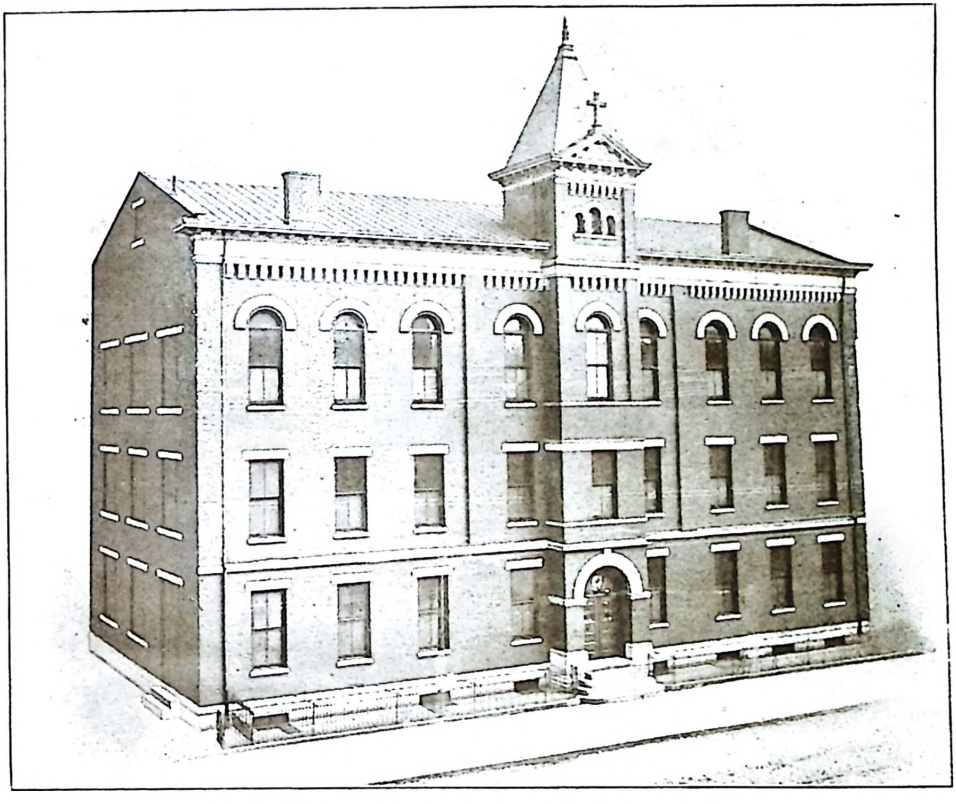
This arrangement received the approbation of Archbishop Purcell on July 4, 1860, and remained in force until the beginning of the school year 1891. To understand how such a plan was feasible it is necessary to take into consideration the short distance that separated the two schools, the fact that both parishes were served by the Franciscan Fathers, and that there were no parish limits as we have them today. For almost thirty years the plan proved practical.

Finances

To think that everything went ahead so glowingly as the simple recital of of the progress in the great building plan would seem to imply, would certainly be a false impression. Difficulties, among which financial ones were surely not the least, were encountered, as was only to be expected. The vast project would have been a great undertaking for any time, but the fact must never be lost sight of that, at least as far as the payment of the debts was concerned—always the most difficult part in any building venture—it was being executed during the difficult financial period of the Civil War. Consequently we must never forget this, if we are to rightly appreciate the sacrifices made by the people and the courage of the Fathers in attempting during those times a plan of such magnitude.

Father Otto Jair, O.F.M., the organizer of the parish, placed the situation before the people and asked their assistance. From the *Verzeichniss der Beitraege zum Bau und Ausstattung der Kirche zum hl. Franziskus*, preserved in the provincial

archives, we learn that the first donor was Nicholas Hoeffer who contributed thirty-two dollars in October, 1858. Donations would not have been sufficient to obtain the ready money required for a huge building program, so the Fathers were obliged to borrow money. The *Verzeichniss der gelehnten Kapitalien zum Bau der Kirche zur Ehre des hl. Franziskus Seraph*, begun also in October, 1858, reveals a large list of names.



OLD ST. FRANCIS SCHOOL — DEDICATED IN 1861

Donations, however, were few until January 20, 1859, when Father Otto announced in the *Wahrheitsfreund* that a city-wide collection for the construction of the church, monastery and gymnasium would be taken up among the German speaking parishes. Archbishop Purcell had given his approval, and Father Joseph Ferneding, the vicar-general, and the clergy had given a willing consent. The collection was made in a very methodical manner. The first parish to be canvassed was, naturally, St. John's. Collections were also taken up in the parishes of St. Mary, St. Paul, St. Clement, St. Joseph, St. Philomena and St. Francis de Sales.

In his appeal Father Otto employed the naive words of St. Francis, which the saint used when begging for stones to repair the delapidated church of St. Damian in Assisi, as is related in the so-called *Legend of the Three Companions:* "He that shall give me one stone, shall have one reward, but he that shall give two, shall have two rewards, yea, and he that giveth three, shall have three rewards." To all generous patrons, besides spiritual benefits, a picture of the proposed church, monastery and gymnasium was promised.

The appeal brought results. On November 17 of the same year, 1859, Father Otto publicly thanked the German Catholics for the $11,000.00 that had been contributed, singling out for especial thanks the noble St. John parish that had given more than $5,000.00, and St. Bonifice parish, Louisville, Ky., which, upon the simple request of its pastor, Father Dionysius Abarth, O.F.M., had contributed $1,000.00 to the fund.

As is always the case, many of the subscriptions were not paid. To those who were in arrears Father Otto appealed on February 24, 1860, stating that he had intended to reach them before the opening of Lent, but a severe illness of four weeks had prevented him. Since it was still impossible for him to do so, for he still suffered from the effects of his illness, and since Lent had already come, he begs them to personally bring their contributions to St. John parish house or to the temporary St. Francis monastery.

So frequent an event as a fair or a bazaar in a parish would hardly be a historical event worth noticing. But the one held in 1862 to raise money to pay off the large debt of the parish is worth mentioning. Besides being a considerable success, for the amount of $4,125.00 was raised, the manner of advertising the fair was quite unique. A special paper of four pages, called *Der Mohawk,* was published each day for the duration of the fair, beginning on February 23 and lasting until March 4, with a ninth and final number appearing on March 11. The little paper was not distributed gratis, but a charge of twenty-five cents was made for the entire series of nine issues, or five cents for a single copy.

The manner of inviting the various parishes to attend was very interesting and recalls many things in the past history of the city of Cincinnati.

Aufruf

Katholiken von Cincinnati und Umgebung auf zur Fair in der grossen "St. Franziskus" Schulhalle in Mohawk!

Heilige Dreifaltigkeits-Gemeinde, Du Mutter und Grossmutter aller andern

Gemeinden, erfreue die juengste Enkelin mit deinem gutherzigen Besuche.

Mutterherzen sind gar weit
Und zu Opfern stets bereit.

St. Maria-Gemeinde, Du edle Nachbarin, beehre die Fair Deiner Freundin mit Deiner gewuenschten Gegenwart.

Freundschaft ist ein grosses Gut
Gibt uns Freuden, Trost und Muth.

St. Joseph's-Gemeinde herbei! Hurrah fuer Texas! Ihr habt immer mit dem Mohawk geliebaeugelt und treu zur Union gehalten, kommt zur Fair: wir wollen der Secession gemeinschaftlich ein *pereat* bringen. (*)

Es lebe, wer es redlich meint,
Er sei geehrt als edler Freund.

St. Philomena-Gemeinde besuche Deine Landsleute ueber dem Rhein, im freundschaftlichen Mohawk, und Du wirst eine zudringliche Aufnahme finden.

Freundlich laden wir Dich ein
Komm zu uns hier ueberm Rhein.

St. Paulus-Gemeinde Mehrere hundert Waegen stehen auf dem Pendleton, spanne ein, um uns auf unserer Mohawk-Fair eine willkommene Visite abzustatten.

Steiget von dem Huegel nieder
Euch erwarten Eure Brueder.

St. Augustinus-Gemeinde! Du kannst zu Wasser und zu Land nach dem Mohawk kommen. Benuetze diese herrliche Gelegenheit, eine Lustparthie zur Mohawk-Fair zu machen, um bei diesen schlechten Zeiten Etwas zu gewinnen.

Kommet Alle zu uns her
In die schoene Mohawk-Fair.

St. Antonius-Gemeinde, Du bist ohnediess mit der St. Franziskus-Gemeinde geistlich verwandt; Deine liebe Gegenwart gereicht dem Mohawk zu grosser Ehre.

(*) The part of the city in which St. Joseph parish lay was called Texas; it must not be forgotten, too, that the fair took place during the Civil War.

Auf der Grossen Mohawk-Fair
Werde Jedem seine Ehr'.

Alle andern Gemeinden, die unsere Stadt rings umlagern, sind freundlichst eingeladen, die Wunderdinge, die die grosse Mohawk-Fair dem entzueckten Auge darbietet, mit Staunen zu bewundern.

Kommt auf Wagen und zu Pferd,
Alle sind uns lieb und werth.

Schliesslich laden wir die **St. Johannes-Gemeinde,** die Mutter aller unserer Ordens-Gemeinden, freundschaftlich ein, und Jeder, welcher die Mohawk-Fair besucht, wird in einem Meisterstuecke plastischer Kunst den engen Verband beider Gemeinden, der St. Johannes Bapt. und der St. Franziskus Seraphicus-Kirche veranschaulicht finden.

Den alten Mohawk Jeder kennt,
Und Jeder ihn mit Ehrfurcht nennt,
Er thuet sicher seine Pflicht
Vergisst der eignen Faire nicht.

Another fair was held in May, 1865, to raise money for a tower clock. Similar features were used, and another paper, called *Mohawk der Zweite,* was published for the duration of the fair.

Father Otto Jair, O.F.M.

During the course of our narrative the name of Father Otto Jair, O.F.M., has been mentioned repeatedly. A brief sketch of this capable and universally loved friar, the founder of St. Francis church, monastery and school, organizer of the parish, its first pastor, is eminently in place here before we conclude the account of the foundation. Joseph Jair, our Father Otto, was born in the prosperous city of Bozen, beautifully situated in Southern Tyrol in the midst of the picturesque Dolomite mountain region. Before the World War it belonged to Austria, now it lies within Italian territory, which has been the reason why the city is now known as Bolzano.

The first pastor of St. Francis entered the world on July 15, 1815, the Order of St. Francis on September 22, 1835, and the priesthood on July 14, 1839.

Sent by his superiors to the mission in America, he arrived in Cincinnati in May, 1848, and was stationed at St. John church. The following year he was transferred to Louisville, Kentucky, where he labored as pastor of St. Boniface church. He remained in Louisville eight years, returning to St. John church,

REVEREND FR. OTTO JAIR, O.F.M.
FOUNDER AND FIRST PASTOR, 1859-1862

Cincinnati, in 1856. The next two years saw him paving the way for an independent foundation of Franciscans in Cincinnati and commencing the construction of St. Francis church.

As we already know, he was appointed the first custos of the new Franciscan Custody of St. John the Baptist, February 19, 1859. He stayed at St. John's until the completion of St. Francis church, when he made his residence at the temporary monastery. During the next three years he not only guided the destinies of the Custody, but was also the outstanding figure in the great building program which we have chronicled.

After his first term as custos in 1862 he returned to St. John's, made a trip to his native Tyrol in the same year to visit his aged father and to work in the interests of the Custody. He was elected custos for a second and a third term, holding the office during the years 1868-1873. In recognition of his services to the Church Archbishop Purcell appointed him, February 7, 1872, vicar-general of the German speaking Catholics of the archdiocese of Cincinnati in place of the deceased Rev. Joseph Ferneding. Father Otto died at his beloved St. John's on May 18, 1885.

Early Societies of St. Francis Church

When Father Otto relinquished the pastorate in 1862, he left the parish well organized. During his term of office four societies had been founded for the spiritual advancement of their members and to aid the church, and several confraternities introduced. St. Francis Men Society was founded December 25, 1859; St. Anthony Young Men Society was established January 1, 1860; St. Clare Ladies Society was established January 8, 1860, and the Immaculata Young Ladies Society formed January 15, 1860—all within the course of four weeks. Since 1860 the monthly conferences of the *Third Order of St. Francis*, introduced very early in Cincinnati by the Fathers, have been held in St. Francis church. The *Archconfraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was established in* 1860, and in 1861 the *Confraternity of the Scapular* was formed.

Another distinctive feature of St. Francis church, introduced by Father Otto in 1860 and continued ever since, is the annual solemn celebration of the octave in preparation for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which had been declared a dogma of the Church only six years before. For the first four years the daily evening sermons were preached by Father Francis de Hieronymo Holzer, O.F.M., one of the early Tyrolese Fathers and a preacher of great renown. In connection with the celebration of the octave we can mention in passing that the parishioners and friends of St. Francis' of two decades

SANCTUARY OF ST. FRANCIS CHURCH

(Before 1907)

and more ago still speak of the exquisite Blessed Virgin hymns, composed for the most part by the Tyrolese Franciscan, Father Arsenius Niedrist, O.F.M., and sung so well by Mr. Louis Beck.

IV

First Period

1859 — 1891

THE first thirty-two years of the existence of St. Francis church and parish can be called the period of consolidation and completion. The essential things had been completed; all the necessary buildings had been erected and a flourishing parish commenced. If, therefore, the events of the first period are not so colorful as the ones recorded up to now, it was not due to any lack of initiative on the part of clergy or parishioners, but simply because there was no need of doing things that have the glamor attendant upon the origin of any church, parish or institution.

It was a time of spiritual cultivation, of intense Catholic life, which unfortunately leaves so very few tangible traces upon which the historian can build. But no period is devoid of all events.

Father Francis de Hieronymo Holzer, the Second Pastor, 1862 — 1865

In its second pastor St. Francis parish possessed the greatest orator among the old Tyrolese Fathers who had come to America. He was born June 6, 1823, at Mutters in the Tyrol, became a Friar Minor in 1840, and was ordained a priest in 1846. For several years he was preacher at the cathedral of Salzburg. In 1858 he came to the United States, and was stationed at St. John's, Cincinnati, until the completion of St. Francis church, when he was assigned to the monastery. From 1861 until 1865 he was superior.

His work in the confessional, the pulpit, and among the sick was manifestly blessed. Personally Father Francis was reserved and unassuming: if he was fiery and forceful in the pulpit, in ordinary life he was simple and mild. After working seven years in America he returned to his fatherland in 1865. His farewell sermon on Holy Friday, 1865, was particularly touching.

The Altars

When Father Holzer assumed the pastorate of St. Francis', the church was by no means fully furnished. Up to his time the altars had been only temporary ones. The former high and side altars, in use until the present ones were erected in 1907, were monuments of his term of office. Made by two Benedictine lay brothers of Covington, Kentucky, Brothers Cosmas and Claude, and by Messrs. Paul Getrein and Louis Steiner, they were installed in September, 1862. The antipendium of the high altar was embellished with fine pictures of the four Doctors of the Western Church: on the right Sts. Augustine and Gregory; on the left Sts. Ambrose and Jerome. These pictures were painted by the artist, Mr. Joseph Schmitt, then of Melrose, New York, later of Covington, Kentucky.

Painting of St. Francis

Later the large altar-piece depicting St. Francis in Glory, and the two lateral paintings were added. The altar-piece is deserving of study. The original of this painting was made by the renowned artist Gebhard Flatz (1800-1881), who was born at Wolfurt near Bregenz. This picture, the original of which forms the altar-piece of the Franciscan church at Schwaz, Tyrol, whence the Cincinnati friars must have derived the desire to have it copied for their principal church, when exhibited at the Porta del Populo in Rome in the year 1846, met with general admiration. Frederick Overberg, the great and pious artist, when seeing it later on, exclaimed in delight: "Here is a painting in the old Italian style." He was overcome with surprise when he discovered that it came from the hand of his former pupil and close friend.

The painting portrays St. Francis of Assisi in heavenly glory. In this apotheosis of the saint he is kneeling on a cloud, with arms outstretched in prayer, surrounded by four flying angels. Above him are Christ and His Mother looking down from heaven upon the saint. Below are four Franciscan saints, from left to right: St. Francis Solanus, who is standing and holds a cross in one hand and a baptismal shell in the other; then come the two kneeling figures, first of St. Elizabeth of Hungary with the traditional roses, and then St. Clare with the monstrance; on the right is St. Bonaventure, who stands clothed in pontifical robes holding a book and crosier with the cardinal's hat at his feet. In the background is Assisi with the little church of St. Mary of the Portiuncula well to the fore. The grouping of the figures is very fine and the blend of colors rich and masterful.

The copy in St. Francis church was made by Casper Jele of Innsbruck

REVEREND FR. PASCHAL KERNER, O.F.M.
THE PRESENT PASTOR, 1934-

(1814-1893), a pupil of Flatz. Jele was not merely a copyist, however, but an excellent artist himself. The first Tyrolese Franciscans in Cincinnati were his generous patrons, commissioning him to paint not only the picture just mentioned, but years before the picture of St. Clement in St. Clement church, St. Bernard, Ohio, and a picture for the church at Pomeroy, Ohio, when it was still under the care of the Fathers. The picture at St. Francis' is without doubt the most valuable artistic treasure that the church possesses. At present it hangs on the north wall of the choir on the Gospel side of the church. We shall not attempt to describe the other paintings. A glance at the illustration of the former sanctuary will give a clear idea of the wealth of fine paintings that graced the church and attest to the artistic appreciation of the early Fathers. When the present altars were installed, the paintings were put into frames and now adorn the walls of the baptistery, the sacristies and the monastery.

The high altar was finished, at least partly, for the feast of St. Francis, October 4, 1862, on which occasion the Right Reverend Coadjutor Bishop Rosencrans of Cincinnati celebrated a Pontifical High Mass. The Custos, the Very Rev. Eusebius Schmid, O.F.M., recently returned from Rome, where he received the permission, gave the papal blessing at the conclusion of the services in the afternoon, when the anniversary of the St. Francis Men Society was celebrated. Even on such a comparatively modest celebration the men held a small public parade in which the men and young men of St. John parish took part. Two bands accompanied the parade.

Another need of the church was supplied when an organ of twenty-six registers, built by Messrs. Koehnken and Grim of Cincinnati, was dedicated before the High Mass on June 26, 1864. First psalms 148, 149 and 150, inviting all creatures to praise God, were sung, and then came the blessing of the instrument, whereupon followed the *Te Deum* accompanied by the full organ.

The Bells of St. Francis

Shortly after, on Sunday, July 3, 1864, two large bells, one of 2,050 and the other of 3,500 pounds were consecrated. During the morning the bells, tastefully decorated, had been exhibited to the parish. At 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon an immense crowd gathered to witness the always impressive ceremony. St. Francis Men and St. Anthony Young Men Societies formed a procession, and amidst resounding music entered the church, which was soon filled to capacity with other worshippers. Coadjutor Bishop Rosencrans, assisted by the Fathers of the monastery, had Pontifical Vespers and consecrated the bells. The sermon was preached by Father Otto Jair, O.F.M., the founder of

the parish. The collection, so well called in German, *Pathengeschenke*, amounted to $3,228. The two smaller bells had been consecrated by Archbishop Purcell some five years earlier on Sunday, November 27, 1859. Since the church was not finished at that time, the ceremonies took place at St. John's.

Other events of more than ordinary significance that took place during the pastorate of Father Holzer were the solemn commemoration of the newly canonized Japanese martyrs and the eighth general meeting of the Central Verein in the parish hall on May 25, 26 and 27, 1863. The former event occurred two months before. Beginning on March 22, 1863, it lasted for an entire week. A picture of the 26 crucified martyrs, St. Peter Baptist, O.F.M., and companions, was hung above the handsomely decorated high altar. The sermons, two daily, were preached by Father Francis X. Weninger, S.J., and at the evening services a goodly sized orchestra accompanied the festive hymns composed by the versatile missionary. Eight confessors were occupied daily in the confessional and more than four thousand Holy Communions were distributed.

A similar solemnity was the one held in connection with the Forty Hours' Devotion during the Christmas holidays of 1863 in honor of the Franciscan martyrs of Gorkum, whose sanctity had been declared on June 29 of that year. Father Francis X. Weninger, S.J. again preached, and Archbishop Purcell, to conclude the commemoration, celebrated a Pontifical High Mass, and in the afternoon gave a talk on the new saints of the Church, whose canonization in St. Peter's, Rome, he himself had attended.

Father Eusebius Schmid, O.F.M., the Third Pastor, 1865 — 1867

After holding the office of custos from 1862 until 1865, Father Eusebius Schmid, O.F.M., became the third pastor of St. Francis parish, 1865-1867. He was a native of the city of Gries which lies adjacent to Bozen in Southern Tyrol. Fifteen years after his ordination to the priesthood he came to Cincinnati on Dec. 10, 1861. Hardly a month had passed when he was elected to the first position in the Custody. Shortly before his return to Europe in 1867 the St. Anthony Young Men Society surprised him by giving to the church a gorgeous set of red velvet vestments heavily stitched in gold. The vestments were designed by the same Father Bertrand, O.F.M., who had made the first sketches of the church, and embroidered by Isabelle Larcher of Hall, Tyrol. According to reports the young men contributed $1,400 for the vestments. On the same occasion the Immaculata Young Ladies Society gave a solid silver censer.

Father Eusebius' pastorate was short, but thanks to his directive ability

the parish owed many benefits. On October 1, 1865, Father Francis X. Weninger, S.J., opened the first mission held in the parish. During the eight days of its duration the ten confessionals were besieged by the faithful and more than 5,000 Holy Communions were distributed.

The statue of St. Francis that fills the niche above the central door of the church, although erected after he no longer guided the parish, is one of the remembrances of the pastorate of Father Eusebius, for he was the one who ordered it. This work of art, made in the Royal Foundry at Munich, was a gift of Mr. George A. Weber, a member of the parish, who gave in all $2,825 for its making and erection. The figure is 8 feet 3 inches high and shows the Poverello as the stigmatized saint. The left hand points to the wound in the side, while the right hand, gently opened, is hanging to expose its miraculous wound. The statue inclines forward a little, the head is slightly bowed, and the left foot is advanced as if the saint was about to approach the onlooker, all details that give the statue a life-like appearance. It was blessed by Archbishop Purcell on March 22, 1868.

Father Ubald Webersinke, O.F.M., the Fourth Pastor, 1867 — 1874

The companion of Father Eusebius on his trip to America in 1861 became the next pastor of St. Francis', and in Father Ubald Webersinke, O.F.M., the parish received a whole-souled, lovable shepherd. Kaltern, now Caldaro, in Southern Tyrol was his birthplace. He was only thirty years of age when he came to Cincinnati, first ministering at St. Francis' and then in 1863 transferred to St. John's where he remained two years. Thereupon he returned to St. Francis' of which he was made pastor in 1867. Like two of his predecessors, he was later elected Custos, holding the office for two consecutive terms from 1873 until 1879. Father Ubald went to his reward in 1909.

Being a great lover of Franciscan traditions, we are not surprised to hear that St. Francis church obtained its first Christmas crib during the pastorate of Father Ubald. It must have been one of his first cares, for it was set up for the Christmas of 1867. For the greater part of this year St. Francis parish was enabled to show its gratitude to St. John congregation for its generosity to the building fund of the church. While the new St. John church was in the course of construction from April until December, 1867, the parishioners of St. Francis' shared their church with the members of its mother parish.

Disastrous things were happening to the successors of St. Peter during these years that Father Ubald was pastor of St. Francis'. In a movement to

REV. FR. FRANCIS H. HOLZER, O.F.M.
1862-1865

REV. FR. EUSEBIUS SCHMID, O.F.M.
1865-1867

REV. FR. UBALD WEBERSINKE, O.F.M.
1867-1874

help the Holy Father a large meeting was held in the parish hall on the evening of March 22, 1868. Father A. B. Schwenniger of St. Paul church addressed the crowd assembled for the concert on the difficult Roman situation. The result of the meeting was the foundation of the Pope Pius Society for the financial assistance of the Pope. Father Ubald and several parishioners played prominent parts in the society, and St. Francis parish had one of its most flourishing branches.

The spiritual progress of the congregation was provided for by a mission given in 1869 by the two Franciscan Fathers Apollinaris Hattler and Samuel Neuner. Later, in the same month of December, 1869, a mission for the Polish and Bohemian Catholics was given in the church by Father J. M. Gartner.

Nor did Father Ubald forget the exterior beauty of the house of God. During the summer of 1869 the church was newly decorated by Messrs. Geiger and Schmitt, the former doing the fresco work, the latter the four large paintings placed in the arch of the ceiling above the windows. They portrayed the Stigmatization of St. Francis, his Death, St. Clare and the Turks, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary dispensing alms. Above the Blessed Virgin altar Mr. Schmitt painted a picture of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and over the altar of St. Anthony a corresponding one of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Father Francis Lings, O.F.M., the Fifth Pastor, 1874 — 1880

A sign of an approaching change in the parish, hardly noticeable, it is true, for many years, but certain nevertheless, can be seen in the appointment of its fifth pastor, Father Francis Lings. He was the first to be born in the United States, the city of New York being his birthplace. In early youth, however, he came to Cincinnati, where he attended St. Francis Gymnasium. Four years after his ordination in 1870, he became pastor of St. Francis, having been attached to the church since 1871. After leaving the parish in 1880, Father Francis did brilliant work in Detroit, Mich. His last years were spent in Oldenburg, Ind. His death occurred in 1924.

One of the first tasks that confronted Father Francis was to redecorate the church, the last decoration not having proved durable. This time it was done in oil by Mr. Thien, simply but tastefully. The paintings done by Mr. Schmitt some six years before remained untouched. The marks of time, too, were beginning to show on the parish buildings. To put them in good repair again, a large fair was held from which $4,000 were realized. This sufficed

to paint the exterior of the buildings and to make other necessary restorations.

The third mission to be held in the parish was conducted by the Jesuit Fathers Karlstaettter, Haag and Hieber, in 1877.

Father Maximilian Schaefer, O.F.M., the Sixth Pastor, 1880 — 1888

The sixth pastor of St. Francis church brought with him his estimable qualities of organizing ability, learning and systematic work. Father Maximilian was a native Cincinnatian, having been born here on July 8, 1851. He attended St. Francis school, the Gymnasium later on, and was ordained on May 14, 1874. Before coming to St. Francis he had been assigned to Oldenburg and Lafayette, Indiana, and Hamilton, Ohio. When he left St. Francis' in 1888 he went to St. George parish, where he was pastor from 1888-1900. Beginning with his pastorate at St. Francis in 1880 until his death in 1907 Father Maximilian was editor of the *Senbote des goettlichen Herzens Jesu*, one of the periodicals published by the Cincinnati Franciscans, which he raised to a high literary value.

Notwithstanding his many duties, Father Max, as he was called, found ample time to devote to his principal work, the care of the parish. In 1881 he undertook the arduous task of a house-collection to pay the expenses incurred from the installation of a steam heating system in the church. The proceeds of the collection also enabled him to make needed repairs in the school: new floors were laid, and the hall redecorated by Mr. F. X. Hefele, and new lights installed.

In 1884 the church received two small altars, one of our Lady of Perpetual Help, the other of St. Aloysius. The first was a gift of the Hoehn family, the latter, known as the Sodality altar, was donated by the members of that society. In the same year a fine sanctuary lamp was presented to the church; its donor, a poor widow.

Great charitable service was rendered by St. Francis and St. John parish in 1883 and 1884, when they assisted the sufferers of the great floods of those years. St. Francis monastery was made the headquarters for the collection of money, food and clothing, to be distributed to the stricken members of other parishes lying in the flooded district of the city.

Father Maximilian had the honor and responsibility of being pastor of

St. Francis church during the time when several silver jubilee celebrations occurred.

The Silver Jubilee of the Custody, February 19, 1884

Twenty-five years had elapsed since the Cincinnati friars were organized into an independent custody. Much progress had been achieved during that quarter of a century. The Fathers had extended their activities to seven more dioceses, Fort Wayne, Vincennes now Indianapolis, Peoria, Leavenworth, Marquette, Detroit and London, Ontario; and they had every reason to look back with satisfaction on the years in which they had worked so zealously.

Their great friend and benefactor, Archbishop Purcell, was no longer on earth to celebrate with them. He had entered into his eternal rest only the year before. But his successor, the Most Reverend William Elder, Archbishop of Cincinnati, graced the occasion with his presence and celebrated a Pontifical High Mass in St. Francis church. He was assisted by the Very Rev. Otto Jair, O.F.M., as assistant priest; Very Rev. Vincent Halbfass, O.F.M., Provincial of the Sacred Heart Province, and Very Rev. Ubald Webersinke, O.F.M., as deacons of honor; Rev. Jerome Kilgenstein, O.F.M. and Rev. Peter Baptist Englert, O.F.M., as deacon and sub-deacon; and Rev. Henry Moeller, the future archbishop of Cincinnati, as master of ceremonies. Representatives of the diocesan clergy, the Benedictines, Jesuits and Passionists were present at the mass. The sermon was preached by none other than Father Weninger, S.J., who recounted the work of the friars during the first twenty-five years. The students of the gymnasium sang a mass composed especially for the occasion.

An entertainment consisting of music, declamations and tableaux of events from the life of St. Francis was held at the parish hall in the evening.

The Silver Jubilee of the Consecration of the Church, December 21, 1884

It was, no doubt, in preparation for the coming celebration that a seventeen days' mission, given by the Redemptorist Fathers Wissel, Bausch, Rossbach and Weigel, was begun on the first Sunday of Lent, 1884. An unusual meeting, happening several weeks later, can be mentioned here without seriously interrupting the narrative, which will give an insight into the world events of the jubilee year. On the evening of May 27, 1884, a large meeting was held in the parish hall to protest against the seizure of the College of the Propaganda in Rome by the Italian government. It was attended by a large number of

REV. FR. FRANCIS LINGS, O.F.M.
1874-1880

REV. FR. MAXIMILIAN SCHAEFER, O.F.M.
1880-1888

REV. FR. LUKE GOTTBEHOEDE, O.F.M.
1888-1890

people, without distinction to religion, among them some of the most prominent men of the city. The mayor of Cincinnati, Thomas B. Stephens, was chosen president of the committee to draw up resolutions; Reuben R. Springer was one of the many vice-presidents, and among those who expressed their regrets for not being able to attend was Governor Hoadly of Ohio. Father Maximilian was one of the speakers describing the perfidious actions of the Italian government. It was a most enthusiastic meeting as reported in the *Volksfreund* of Cincinnati. To come now to the jubilee celebration.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the consecration of the church was solemnly commemorated in conjunction with the similar anniversary of the St. Francis Men Society. On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 21, 1884, a Pontifical High Mass was celebrated by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Rademacher of Nashville, Tennessee, with the following assistants: Father Luke Gottbehoede, O.F.M., assistant priest; Fathers Athanasius Lingemann, O.F.M. and Theodore Stephan, O.F.M., deacon and sub-deacon and Father Chrysostom Theobald, master of ceremonies. The sermon was preached by the venerable builder of the church and founder of the parish, Father Otto Jair, O.F.M. Under the direction of Mr. John A. Schel, the organist, the choir sang Haydn's Second Mass.

At the Pontifical Vespers in the afternoon Bishop Rademacher again officiated, assisted by the same ministers. Father Ubald Webersinke, O.F.M., however, delivered the sermon. The services completed, the usual parade made its way through the streets of the neighborhood. The grand marshal was Jacob Baumgardner with the assistants, Frederick Farwig and Peter Meyer. The men and young men of St. John parish, St. Mary's, St. Paul's, St. Henry's, St. Augustine's and St. George's joined in the parade to celebrate with the men of St. Francis.

It was for this occasion that Father Maximilian Schaefer, O.F.M. and Father Bonaventure Hammer, O.F.M., published their admirable *Gedenk-Buch der St. Franziskus Seraphikus Gemeinde in Cincinnati, Ohio*, a mine of information and a piece of historical work of which St. Francis' can be proud, for very few churches and parishes in America have had the good fortune to have their history written so well.

The last event of Father Maximilian's regime that we shall record was the solemn declaration of the erection of the Franciscan Custody into a Province which took place in St. Francis church. The execution of the decree, permitting the erection issued by the Holy See on September 11, 1885, was left to the Archbishop of Cincinnati. Accordingly Archbishop Elder formally executed

the decree on March 25, 1886. No more need be said here of the historic occurrence; but it is one more event that endears St. Francis church to every member of the Cincinnati Province.

OLD ST. FRANCIS MONASTERY — DEDICATED IN 1860

Father Luke Gottbehoede, O.F.M., the Seventh Pastor, 1888 — 1890

Father Luke was pastor for only a comparatively short time, and therefore much cannot be said of him. He is remembered, however, for obtaining a new crib, an importation from Europe, for the Christmas of 1888, and for making preparations to replace the windows of the church.

With the close of his pastorate we can terminate the first period of the history of St. Francis parish. During the thirty years of its existence it was closely connected with St. John congregation. This was in no way detrimental to any of the two parishes; on the contrary, for many years the plan worked admirably. A movement, however, was on foot to draw a sharp line of separation between them, and each of them was left to work out its own destiny.

V

Second Period

1891 — 1934

IN the second period of the history of St. Francis parish we see it having its limits sharply defined. A large construction program gives the parochial group of buildings an entirely new appearance. The parish holds its own for many years in spite of the change in the neighborhood from a residential to one with many business places. Especially during the last twenty-five years numerous families moved their homes to the more desirable location in the rapidly developing suburbs of Cincinnati. We see, too, a change in the German character of the parish into one that is decidedly American—cosmopolitan. This was due to the stoppage of German immigration, to the World War, and to the shifting nature of Cincinnati, a quality that it has in common with all large American cities. Finally we mark a decline in the size of the parish, regrettable, of course, but impossible of denial.

Parish Limits, 1891

Up to the year 1891 St. Francis and St. John parishes had no parish limits between them. This plan agreed upon by both parishes was responsible for the unique arrangement whereby the boys of both parishes attended St. Francis school, and the girls of both parishes St. John school. As late as 1881 the two parishes were considered as one, as is clearly seen from the petition of Father Maximilian Schaefer, O.F.M., the pastor of St. Francis church, and Father Otto Jair, O.F.M., the pastor of St. John's, addressed to Archbishop Purcell, asking him to define a common territory for both parishes. The preamble of this petition, dated January 15, 1881, reads as follows: "We humbly subject to your consideration the following respecting the limits of our congregations. St. John the Baptist church, cor. Bremen and Green, and St. Francis Seraphicus church, cor. Vine and Liberty, being only one square from each other, may be considered as one congregation. It was deemed advisable therefore to locate the limits for both as one. After consideration the following

limits were thought just and equitable, and the approval of them is humbly submitted to Your Grace." Whether the Archbishop confirmed the proposed limits or not, cannot be ascertained at the present time, but the document plainly shows the close union existing between the two parishes.

In the course of time, however, the arrangement was no longer looked upon with favor, and a change was desired. Therefore the following agreement, issued on August 23, 1891, was published in both parishes.

To the Members of St. John and St. Francis Parishes

The care for the welfare of the souls entrusted to our charge induces us to make several changes in the parish limits of St. John and St. Francis congregations, which are mainly as follows:

1. Each parish will be given definite limits described below.
2. Both parishes maintain from now on their own parish schools for both boys and girls.
3. All the school children of the two parishes from now on must be sent to that school, and that one only, which is the parish school of the congregation to which their parents belong.

I. The reasons which have given rise to this arrangement are the following:

1. It is of the greatest importance that the priests entrusted with the cure of souls should know exactly which families belong to the respective parish. Where this is not the case, they are not able to attend to their spiritual needs.
2. On account of the close union existing between St. John and St. Francis parishes it has been hitherto impossible to determine whether certain families belonged to one or to the other parish—a situation that, among others, had this evil result that some deliberately evaded their duty to contribute to the support of church and school so that the unavoidable burdens connected with the maintenance of a parish always fell upon the shoulders of the better disposed families.
3. In regard to the school there are the greatest reasons that the children, boys as well as girls, of the parish also attend the school of the parish; for then only is the child by daily attendance at the services in the parish church accustomed from its earliest years to the parish church. It is made possible also for the parents, who frequent the same church, to keep watch over their children; which is especially important when the children leave school after receiving their First Holy Communion.

II. Explanation of this arrangement.

1. In the future each member of the two parishes must attach himself either to St. John or St. Francis congregation. Anyone can consider himself belonging to that parish in whose church he has a seating, no matter where he lives.
2. Families that have no seatings in either of the churches belong to the parish in whose district they reside.
3. All members must have their children baptized in their own parish church, send their children of school age, girls and boys, to the respective school; have the banns of marriage published, and the marriages performed in their own parish church; in case of illness, call one of the priests of the parish; and have the funeral held from their own church.

III. Limits of the two parishes.

1. St. John Parish. To St. John's belong the western side of Vine St. north of Green, and all the territory that lies west of Vine and north of Green to the eastern side of Central Ave.; west of Elm St. also the northern side of Liberty St.
2. St. Francis Parish. To St. Francis parish belongs the southern side of Green St. and all to the south of Green St. to the northern side of Fourteenth St.; then the eastern side of Vine St. and all that lies to the east of Vine to the western side of Main St. north of Liberty.

Then follows an exhortation to observe the new arrangement and the hope expressed that the bond of unity that existed between St. John and St. Francis parishes would not be weakened by the new plan.

This document is self-explanatory and needs no commentary. The underlying motives that prompted the new arrangement and the internal effects on the two parishes are perhaps too abstruse to attempt a description. One external effect, however, as is clearly stated, is the cleavage of the two schools, each of them henceforth providing for both boys and girls.

Father Chrysostom Theobald, O.F.M., the Eighth Pastor, 1890 — 1900

The above mentioned arrangement was promulgated during the pastorate of Father Chrysostom Theobald, O.F.M., who, with the exception of a few years spent at Oldenburg, Indiana, has always had his headquarters at St. Francis Monastery. The eighth pastor of St. Francis parish was born in New York City, March 6, 1858. Upon entering the Franciscan Order in 1874 he

THE VERY REVEREND
CHRYSOSTOM THEOBALD, O.F.M.
1890-1900

REVEREND FR. LEONARD NURRE, O.F.M.
1900-1903

was given the name of the sainted patriarch of Constantinople, John Chrysostom, a name whose meaning and association brings up thoughts of eloquent oratory, nobly continued in the life of the Saint's namesake. Father Chrysostom has given popular missions from north to south and from coast to coast throughout the country for many years.

The highest office in the Province, that of provincial was held by him from 1903 until 1909. It was towards the close of his second term that he celebrated his silver sacerdotal jubilee in St. Francis church on March 13, 1906, and twenty-five years later, on April 26, 1931, the fiftieth anniversary. On the latter occasion the Most Reverend John T. McNicholas, O.P., archbishop of Cincinnati, the Most Reverend Albert T. Daeger, O.F.M., archbishop of Santa Fe, the Most Reverend Joseph H. Albers, auxiliary-bishop of Cincinnati, and the Most Reverend Urban J. Vehr, then bishop-elect of Denver, did honor to the jubilarian by their presence at the Holy Mass. At the evening reception a throng of some thousand people that taxed the parish hall to its capacity testified its devotion to their former pastor.

The parish has much for which to be thankful to Father Chrysostom. It was through his leadership, while assistant pastor of St. Francis' in 1884, that the *Sodalist* was founded. This little monthly paper, published in the interest of the Sodalities of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the Sodalities of St. Francis church, has made the name of the parish known throughout the country. It is an achievement of which any parish might be proud. The Sodalities of St. Francis' enjoyed an intense life and spirit of enterprise in years past. In 1889 we find Father Chrysostom, always interested in the young people, greatly instrumental in organizing the Literary Union of the Young Men Sodality. While he was pastor, the young men and young ladies of the Sodality gave on March 1, 8, 22 and 29, 1896, a dramatic presentation consisting of tableaux taken from the Passion of Our Lord, at which the parish choir rendered Mueller's Passion Oratorium and Haydn's Seven Words of Christ on the Cross. The success of the young people was phenomenal.

In 1891 the pastor had the church newly decorated. Among the improvements were the marble wainscoting and the new windows in the church. Seven years later in 1898 the church was thoroughly restored. The paintings were cleaned, the altars and statuary retouched, the pulpit rearranged and new gas lights installed, and in the following years the sanctuary received a new pavement, the church new confessionals and a new set of the stations of the Way of the Cross. We shall hear more about Father Chrysostom's activities when we deal with the new school.

A missionary himself, the pastor could not be forgetful of these spiritual renewals for his own parish. Two of them, the fifth in the history of the parish, conducted by the Franciscan Fathers of the Cincinnati Province, Fathers Jerome Kilgenstein, O.F.M., Aloysius Kurz, O.F.M. and Paul Alf, O.F.M., in January, 1893; the sixth given in February, 1900, by Father Pacificus Winterheld, O.F.M., Daniel Heile, O.F.M. and David Kersting, O.F.M. of the same Province.

Father Leonard Nurre, O.F.M., the Ninth Pastor, 1900 — 1903

Of Father Leonard Nurre, O.F.M., as the ninth pastor of St. Francis' little of exceptional note has come down to us. It is almost an accepted rule of the science of history that silence speaks for quiet times, when everything goes smoothly and no extraordinary changes are required. Such must have been the years during which Father Leonard served the parish.

He was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, January 7, 1854, and attended the school of the neighboring parish of St. Mary. On September 8, 1870, the feast of the Nativity of our Lady, he became a Friar Minor, and was ordained to the priesthood on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1876. Father Leonard was a man of much reserve, which appeared as severity to many. Intimate acquaintance, however, revealed a warm heart full of kindness towards such privileged to share his closer friendship. While pastor of St. Francis he celebrated the silver jubilee of his ordination on December 8, 1901. Father Leonard departed from this life on April 5, 1919.

Father Edmund Klein, O.F.M., the Tenth Pastor, 1903 — 1921

A duration record as pastor of St. Francis was estblished by Father Edmund Klein, O.F.M., who loved the parish with an ardent devotion, and who in turn endeared himself to all. Perhaps the finest appreciation of him is found in the *Acta Ordinis Minorum* of December, 1927. "An irreprehensible priest," it says of him, "and an exemplar of conventual life, he was a model to all. He loved the beauty of the house of God, sparing no labor or expense to have the divine services in the churches entrusted to his care celebrated as solemnly as possible. Gifted with a resonant voice, it delighted him to sing the praises of God and His Mother.

"Day and night he was at the service of his flock, ready to help them with his wise advice and pastoral solicitude. He captivated all by his absolute candor, abhorring even the shadow of dissimulation. With courtesy he joined

prudence and firmness, never moved by changing opinions, but like a sturdy oak maintained himself in truth, justice and good counsel. He loved the youth, was solicitous to have excellent schools, fostered studies, and it is of no little credit to him that he courageously undertook and successfully finished the building of St. Francis Preparatory Seminary." We would like to recall, too, his inimitable catechetical instructions to the children.

Father Edmund was born in Obernburg, Bavaria, April 27, 1864. Coming to this country as a boy, he immediately began his studies for the priesthood. On August 30, 1885, he entered the novitiate and was ordained priest on June 26, 1892. With the exception of eight years, spent as pastor of St. Mary church, Metamora, Illinois, and of Sacred Heart church, Peoria, he passed his entire priestly life in St. Francis parish. In 1921 he was elected provincial, the high office that he fulfilled tenaciously in spite of fatal illness during the last years until the very day that his successor, the Very Reverend Urban Freundt, O.F.M., was elected on August 18, 1927—an example of perseverance that can only be ascribed to his gigentic strength of will.

The pastorate of Father Edmund witnessed a construction that substantially changed the whole appearance of the parish plant.

The New School

For many years the school building had become too small for the needs of the parish. After the first St. Francis Gymnasium was built in 1867 the rooms and little hall in the school building formerly used by the students were gradually absorbed by the growing number of children. In 1883 the sodalities had to give up their meeting rooms and find quarters in the basement; the Dramatic Club of the young men were compelled to do this even before. But even then the building was over-crowded.

When, according to the arrangement of 1891, the girls of the parish were also to attend the school, a home had to be obtained for the Franciscan Sisters of Oldenburg, Indiana, who were to teach them. For this purpose a house on Liberty street was purchased. We might add here that the first teachers in St. Francis school were the Brothers of the Holy Cross. They taught until the year 1871, when they were replaced by the Franciscan Brothers. For many years, however, several lay teachers had to be employed to assist the Brothers whose numbers were not sufficient to teach all the children. Since 1918, the year when the Brothers gave up teaching altogether, the Sisters of Oldenburg have charge both of the girls' and boys' departments.

THE VERY REVEREND EDMUND KLEIN, O.F.M.
1903-1921

Early in the last decade of the past century more room was required for the children, which meant that more houses had to be purchased to provide class rooms for the girls. One on the corner of Liberty and Moore streets was acquired for the sum of $12,000. The first floor was employed for the Kindergarten and meeting rooms for the Young Ladies' Sodality, while the second and third floors were used for two class rooms and for the living quarters of the Sisters. But all this was only a makeshift: the rooms were too low for proper ventilation, and there was too little protection against the danger of fire.

Father Chrysostom decided that the only way out of the bad situation was to build a new school. Then the difficult question arose regarding the location. Should the new school be built east or west of Vine street? After long deliberation it became apparent that it was impossible to have one school building on the east side of Vine and another on the west, and that the only solution was to have the new building as close as possible to the old one.

The School Fund

That being agreed upon, the next step was to obtain the necessary property. This was gradually acquired during the ten-year pastorate of Father Chrysostom. Only one piece he found impossible to buy, but that fortunately was obtained shortly before the new school was begun. The parish spent the considerable sum of $45,000 for the acquisition of land on which the new school stands.

In the meantime from the monthly rent of the purchased buildings and by prudent investment of the parish capital a building fund was slowly accumulating. However, it was impossible to commence the urgently needed school because a diocesan regulation forbade the erection of any parish building unless one-half of the necessary sum was on hand.

A building society was then begun in 1905 to which all the members of the parish were invited to subscribe a certain amount to be paid at once or in weekly installments. This plan succeeded beyond all expectations. After the permission of the Most Reverend Archbishop Henry Moeller was obtained, it was decided in a meeting held in May, 1906, to take definite steps for the erection of the new school. The meeting having empowered the pastor to appoint a building committee, Father Edmund selected the following men: Messrs. Frank Jacob, Christian Pohlmann, Joseph Fettig, Edmund Meiners, John Abt, Henry Kolkmeyer, Joseph Gruber, Edward Gartner, Joseph Hirschfeld and Anthony Ronnebaum.

The committee chose Mr. Anthony Kunz as the architect, and after his plans were finally approved by the Diocesan Building Committee, construction on the new school was commenced on June 1, 1906. The building took almost two years to complete.

Dedication of the New School

The new school, a substantial building of three stories, has a frontage of 112 feet on Liberty street and extends to an eighty-foot depth on Moore street. It is of fireproof construction built of concrete, tan pressed brick, sandstone and steel. An imposing entrance on Liberty street gives access to a large auditorium equipped with a stage and facilities for social affairs. The school contains also living quarters for the Sisters.

The dedication services took place on the afternoon of Easter Sunday, April 19, 1908. Archbishop Henry Moeller officiated and also gave an address in English. Father Chrysostom Theobald, at that time provincial, gave an eloquent sermon in German.

Shortly after, from July 6-9, 1908, the parish was host to the National Catholic Educational Association. The new school with its spacious hall, the headquarters of the annual convention, was highly commended by the numerous delegates.

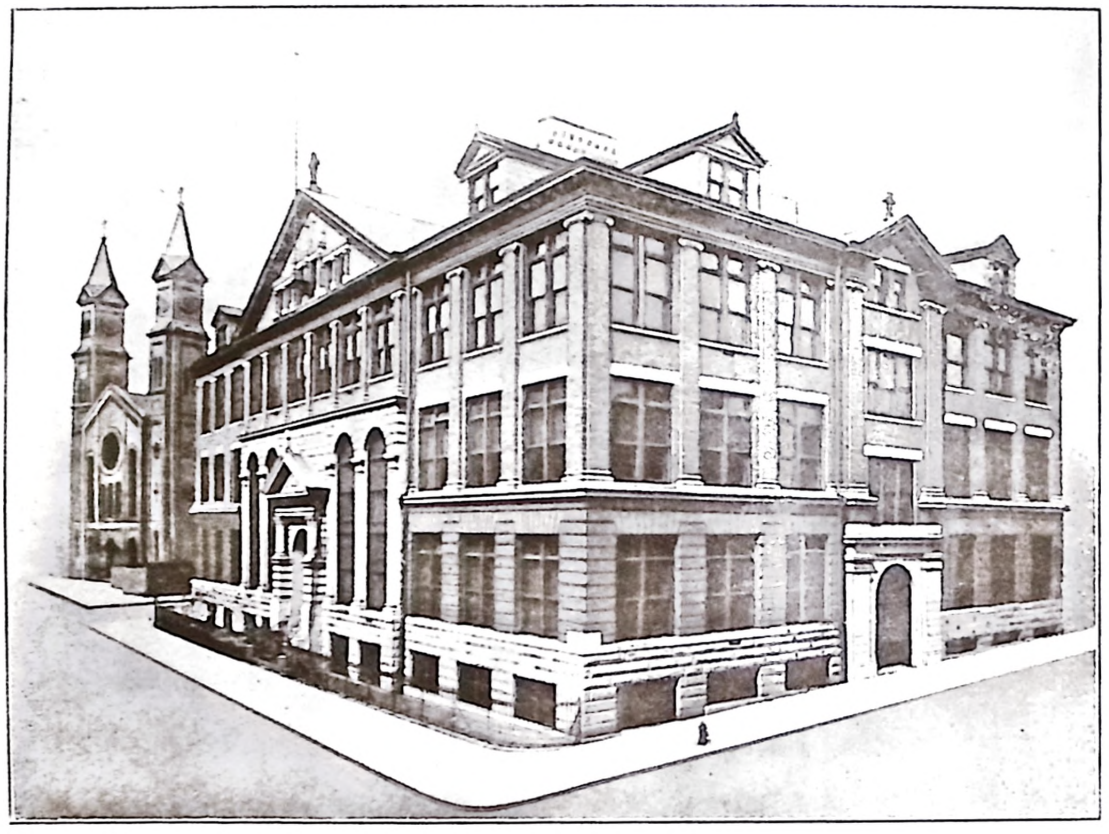
Renovation of the Old School Building

After the new school was completed the old building was thoroughly remodeled and adapted for new purposes. The first floor was used for meeting rooms for the parish societies, a recreation room for the older members of the Sodality, and a room for the St. Vincent de Paul Society. On the second floor there was a sewing room, another for choir practice, and a class room for the boys. The large hall on the third floor was converted into a gymnasium outfitted with all the necessary devices. Separate entrances were constructed for the gymnasium and recreational rooms. The heating plant for both the new and old school building was located in the south end of the basement.

To break up the monotony of the front of the old structure a small tower was erected in the middle, the lower part of which serves as the main entrance to the building. By means of all these alterations St. Francis parish acquired a very serviceable community house.

The financial report of the building committee, issued in 1909 by Frank

Jacob, the president; Louis Beck, the vice-president; Edward Gartner, secretary, and Anthony Ronnebaum, treasurer, informs us that the new school cost $102,505.45, and that $12,439.94 were spent to remodel the old school building, making a total of $114,945.39.



NEW ST. FRANCIS SCHOOL — DEDICATED IN 1908

The New Monastery

A landmark in the parish disappeared when the old monastery, erected in 1860, was torn down in 1906 to make way for the present building. It had outlived its period of usefulness, being no longer able to serve the unpretentious needs of the community. The new monastery was built on the site of the old one, but being much larger, several pieces of property to the north of the old building had to be first acquired.

The new monastery, like the school, is a fireproof building, built of the same materials, and having the same architect, Mr. Anthony Kunz. It is a plain but practical edifice. Its outstanding feature and only claim to architectural attractiveness are the inside court, permitting the entrance of light and air to the rooms and corridors, and the cloister on three sides of the building. It did, however, attract considerable attention, for, following the old monastic building traditions, it was something new for Cincinnati. After it was dedicated

the mayor of the city, the Hon. Edward Dempsey, paid a visit on October 20, 1907, and together with Mr. Anthony Kunz, the architect, Mr. Louis Goldkamp, the contractor, and Mr. Joseph Byrne, the superintendent, took supper with the community.

NEW ST. FRANCIS MONASTERY — DEDICATED IN 1907

Alterations in the Church

The construction of the new monastery permitted desired alterations to be made in the church, which completely changed the appearance of the sanctuary. Five new altars replaced the former ones. Three of them, the high altar with its baldachin or canopy and the two side altars of the Blessed Virgin and St. Anthony have marble bases and oaken superstructures; the other two altars of the Sacred Heart and St. Joseph are also made of the same richly colored wood. A new communion rail was also erected at this time. The altars were made by Mr. John Hackner, Jr., of La Crosse, Wisconsin.

In the rear of the high altar a new choir for the community attached to the monastery was built and furnished with oaken wainscoting and stalls of the same material. The floor between the old sacristies and the oratories was removed and the entire space converted into side choirs, one for the community, the other for the students of the neighboring St. Francis College.

Polished granite pillars supported the upper part of the building in place of the side walls of the sanctuary which were removed.

The floors of the sanctuary as well as of the choirs were paved with tiles, the walls of the side choirs receiving a wainscoting of brown, glazed tiles. A new electric lighting system was also one of the sweeping changes. The new sacristy and baptistery were part of the monastery building, the latter place, however, sufficiently separated from it.

Consecration of the Altars

The new high altar and the two principal side altars were solemnly consecrated by Archbishop Moeller on September 18, 1907. Fathers Alfred Hermann, O.F.M. and Vigil Daeger, O.F.M. assisted His Grace as deacon and subdeacon respectively, while Fathers Apollinaris Grabher, O.F.M. and Egbert Fischer, O.F.M. directed the ceremonies. The bearers of the relics were Fathers Peter Paul Gundermann, O.F.M., Urban Freundt, O.F.M., Stephen Hoffman, O.F.M. and Antonine Brockhuis, O.F.M. In the high altar were placed the relics of the martyrs, Sts. Simplicius and Castus, and a relic of St. John the Baptist; in the side altars relics of Sts. Mansuetus and Martura were sealed in the sepulchra. Father Ermin Schneider, O.F.M. carried the Holy Oils, and Father Herminigild, O.F.M. the incense. Minor offices were filled by the students of the College; the clerics of St. Francis and St. Clement monasteries did the singing under the direction of Father Dennis Engelhard, O.F.M.

Following the consecration Father Edmund Klein, O.F.M., the pastor celebrated the first Solemn High Mass on the newly consecrated high altar, Archbishop Moeller preferring to offer a Low Mass on one of the side altars. At noon the first meal, honored by the presence of the Archbishop, was served in the refectory of the new monastery.

Dedication of the New Monastery

On October 4, 1907, the feast of St. Francis, exactly forty-seven years after the blessing of the old monastery, the new monastery was dedicated. It was an impressive celebration, one of the greatest that St. Francis church has ever witnessed. An imposing procession conducted the Archbishop, Most Reverend Henry Moeller, vested in *cappa magna* to the church, where a Pontifical High Mass was celebrated.

Present in the sanctuary was the Most Reverend Dennis Schuler, O.F.M., the Minister General of the Order, the one-hundred and eighth successor of

St. Francis, who had come to America for official visitation of the New York Province of the Holy Name and the Italian Custody of the Immaculate Conception, and who then came on to Cincinnati for the dedication of the new St. Francis Monastery. It was the first time in the history of the Order that a Minister General had set foot on American soil.

Rev. John F. Schoenhoeft, the vicar-general of the archdiocese preached a most edifying sermon on the life of St. Francis. After the Mass Archbishop Moeller also addressed the assembled clergy and laity.

The service of the "Transitus" or Passing of St. Francis was held in the evening. A splendid sermon by the Most Reverend Minister General entranced the faithful that thronged the church. As Father Peter Paul Gundermann, O.F.M. writes in the chronicle of the monastery: "Never in the history of the Province had the feast of St. Francis been celebrated so solemnly and grandly in our conventual church."

The Golden Jubilee of the Church and Parish

Just as twenty-five years ago a mission was held in preparation for the memorable anniversary of 1884, so also in 1909 another mission, the seventh in its series, was given to prepare for the golden jubilee. The Franciscan Fathers of the Cincinnati Province, Fathers Isidore Verkamp, O.F.M., Angelus Hafertepe, O.F.M., and Herculan Zeug, O.F.M. conducted the mission that began on April 25 and lasted until May 9, 1909.

The golden jubilee celebration was held on Sunday, October 10, 1909, the Most Reverend Archbishop Henry Moeller officiating at the Pontifical High Mass during which the Very Reverend Luke Gottbehoede, O.F.M., a former pastor, preached on the text: "Let us give thanks to the Lord". St. Francis Men Society observed their fiftieth anniversary on the same day with a special Solemn High Mass and general communion earlier in the morning, and with afternoon services consisting of Vespers at which Reverend Chrysostom Jacob, O.M. Cap. was celebrant, and a sermon by the Very Reverend Chrysostom Theobald, O.F.M. The parade in which the men of St. John's, the mother parish, were invited to participate could not be held on account of the rainy weather.

The celebration was continued for three more days. On Monday a reception for the adult members of the Parish was held in the school hall, on Tuesday the school children gave an entertainment, and on Wednesday the school children were in turn entertained.

Friars Gym and Athletic Club

An institution founded within the parish, but from its very beginning having a city-wide membership, is the Friars Gym and Athletic Club. When the question of remodeling the old school building came up in 1908, Father Edmund wished to use the hall on the third floor as a chapel for the children. His intention was to have a place where the school children could attend daily mass without being obliged to cross Vine street with its dangerous traffic.

Father Antonine Brockhuis, O.F.M., then assistant pastor, however, requested Father Edmund to give the hall and other space in the building to the Catholic young men of the city so that he could found a club for them providing them, especially those living in the congested districts, with a gymnasium and other recreational opportunities. It was something new, a genuine pioneer movement for Cincinnati.

Father Edmund favored the plan of his assistant, but first wished to obtain the approval of the Provincial, the Very Reverend Chrysostom Theobald, O.F.M. His consent most gladly given, Father Edmund was most enthusiastic for the club, and gave them the use of a greater part of the old school building. It was in this manner that the Friars G. & A. C. was founded by Father Antonine.

During the chaplaincy of Father Timothy Brockmann, O.F.M., many improvements were made. A progressive step was the purchase in 1921 of "Friarhurst," a summer home and camping place along the Little Miami river near Milford, Ohio.

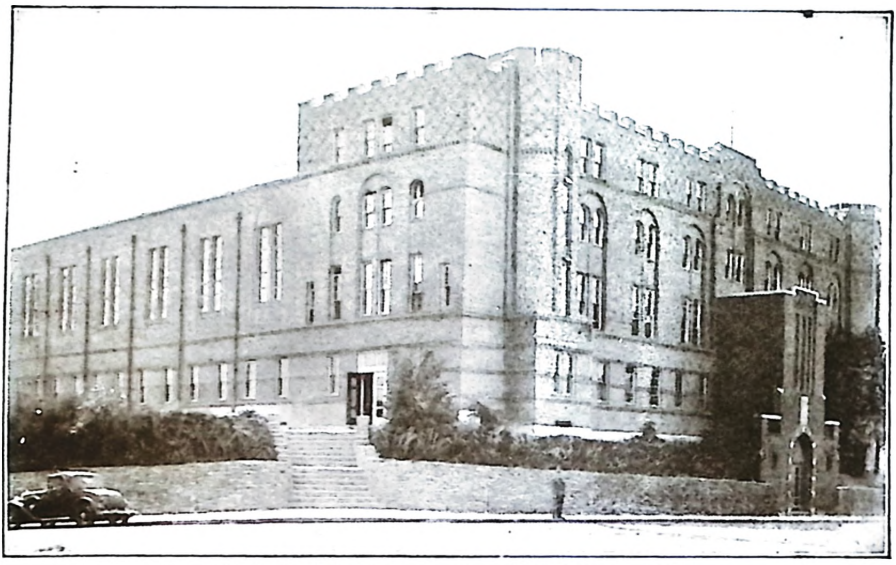
The Friars occupied their first home, generously supplied by the parish, until 1931, when their new clubhouse, situated on the corner of Ohio avenue and McMillan street was completed, where the good work for the young men of the city, begun and fostered by St. Francis', is continued.

Other Improvements Made by Father Edmund

In 1912 Father Edmund had the grotto of our Lady of Lourdes built. In 1914 he procured new stations of the Way of the Cross. The old frames, still in good condition, were utilized to hold them. The entire church was redecorated by the Blank Brothers in 1914. New paintings, but with the same themes as those made by Mr. Joseph Schmitt in 1869, were placed in the arch of the ceiling over the windows and above the side altars. In 1915 an electric bell ringing system was installed at a cost of $1,000, and in 1921 a marble baptismal font was obtained.

SANCTUARY OF ST. FRANCIS CHURCH
(After 1907)

The eighth mission in the parish was given from October 1-15, 1916, by the Capuchin Fathers, Stephen Bienemann, O.M. Cap., Clement Pfeifer, O.M. Cap. and Agatho Rolf, O.M. Cap.



NEW FRIARS GYM & A. C. — OPENED IN 1931

Father Maurice Ripperger, O.F.M., the Eleventh Pastor 1921 — 1933

The successor of Father Edmund was the Reverend Maurice Ripperger, O.F.M., the eleventh pastor, who remained continuously in office until he himself, like his predecessor, was elected Provincial, almost a habit for the pastors of St. Francis. Father Maurice was born near Morris, Indiana on January 20, 1871. He was invested with the Franciscan habit on August 15, 1891, and was ordained on July 24, 1897.

Before coming to the pastorate of St. Francis church he labored in the states of Kansas, Ohio, Illinois, Nebraska and Missouri, engaged at times in teaching the clerics, but by far more often in parochial work. In 1933 Father Maurice was elected Provincial, the arduous position he is at the present time filling most admirably.

It was not long after he arrived in the parish that the new organ, begun during Father Edmund's time and built by the Alfred Mathers Organ Co. of Cincinnati, was dedicated on June 4, 1922. This modern instrument with electric action is in two parts, the great organ in the choir loft and the chancel organ, which can be played from the console of the former, in the west side choir.

The present exterior of St. Francis church is probably the most prominent accomplishment of the pastorate of the present Provincial. For many years the exterior of the church had to be painted repeatedly at a great expense only to be disfigured in a short time by the smoke and grime of the city. Father Maurice conceived the plan of applying a veneer of glazed brick, which would give the building not only an attractive appearance, but would also dispense with the necessity of painting it in the future.

The extensive improvement was carried out during the years 1924 and 1925. The facade was enchanced by a stone entrance, the rest of the building was veneered with glazed brick. A new roof of asbestos slate and cornices of copper were put on the church. The tower clock was repaired and dials of vitrolite installed. The old stone trimmings and the bronze statue of St. Francis above the entrance, all disfigured with coats of paint, were restored to their first state. Due to the good taste that directed the improvements, the building remained absolutely the same in its original fine outlines.

Further improvements were the rebuilding of the wall surrounding the monastery garden. The wall on Liberty street was moved back to make room for a proposed monument to Bishop Edward Fenwick, O.P., the first bishop of Cincinnati. Plans also called for the erection of a bronze tablet in the wall to mark the site of the first Catholic church in Cincinnati. These two projects, however, never materialized. The improvements on the church building, done by F. G. Bauer, the contractor, and other alterations in the school cost about $50,000.

To commemorate the completion of this vast work, that made the old church appear as if it had just been newly erected, a Solemn High Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated on October 4, 1925, the patronal feast day of the parish. Archbishop John T. McNicholas, O.P., who had arrived in Cincinnati only a short time before, was present and favored the congregation with an eloquent sermon.

The present electric fixtures in the body of the church, installed in 1922, are also the work of Father Maurice, who will also be remembered for the continuance of his predecessor's work in putting the parish and school on a sound financial basis, the encouragement that he gave to the musical training of the school children, the hearty cooperation that he gave to the establishment of a branch of the Kolping Society in 1924, and the founding of *The Seraph*, the monthly parish periodical in July, 1926.

Three missions were held in the parish during the pastorate of Father

Maurice; from November 6-27, 1921, by Fathers Flavian Larbes, O. F. M., and Andrew Henze, O. F. M.; in 1927, from February 6-27, by Fathers Fulgence Meyer, O.F.M. and Daniel Linfert, O.F.M.; and the third and last one to the

THE MONASTERY CLOISTER

present time, from October 18 until November 8, 1931, by Fathers Ernest Ott, O.F.M., Cyril Georgel, O.F.M. and Fulgence Meyer, O.F.M. In all, therefore, eleven missions were held in St. Francis church since the beginning of the parish.

Father Alexander Wilberding, O.F.M., the Twelfth Pastor, 1933 — 1934

The twelfth pastor of St. Francis' was Father Alexander Wilberding, O.F.M., a son of the parish. His first assignment after ordination, June 17, 1906, took him to Louisville, Kentucky, where, after being assistant for five years in St. Joseph parish, he became its pastor in 1911. The pastorship of St. Stephen church, Hamilton, Ohio, was his next appointment, which he held from 1917 until 1924, when he became guardian, pastor and lector at Holy Family Monastery, Oldenburg, Indiana. In 1927 he was made a member of the provincial missionary band until 1932, fulfilling in the meantime a temporary appointment as pastor of St. Boniface church, Lafayette, Indiana for the first half of the year 1930. In 1932 he came to St. Francis Monastery, Cincinnati, Ohio, as

commissary of the Third Order, not interrupting, however, his missionary work.

Father Alexander became pastor of St. Francis' in 1933. While giving a mission at Crafton, Pennsylvania in October he had a painful accident from the effects of which he still suffers. In spite of this handicap Father Alexander gave his undivided attention to the needs of the Parish. It was during his term that the parish was deeply grieved by the death, on March 9, 1934, of one of its assistants, the greatly loved and tireless Father Dunstan Leary, O.F.M.

Father Paschal Kerner, O.F.M., the Present Pastor, 1934 — - - - -

The assistant of Father Alexander became his successor when he was transferred to the pastorate of Our Lady of Sorrows church, Kansas City, Missouri in July, 1934. It will be readily understood that for very obvious reasons much cannot be recorded about Father Paschal Kerner, O.F.M., as the thirteenth pastor of St. Francis parish. He has, however, energetically pursued

MONASTERY GARDEN

the work of his predecessor in making preparations for the Diamond Jubilee of the parish. Much that he desired to do could not be carried out, for the present are difficult times.

REV. FR. ALEXANDER WILBERDING, O.F.M.
PASTOR, 1933-1934

REV. FR. SENAN KELLY, O.F.M.
ASSISTANT, 1934-

REV. CORNELIUS GREIN, O.F.M.
ASSISTANT, 1934-

But it is easy to foretell that Father Paschal will give to St. Francis' the untiring zeal, the kindness and ability that has characterized all his priestly work. His two assistants are Rev. Fr. Senan Kelly, O.F.M. and Rev. Fr. Cornelius Grein, O.F.M.

The sketch of the history of St. Francis church and parish has reached its end. There still remains, however, so much that should be recorded, but which must be left unwritten. A parish is not a thing of brick and mortar. It is a living organism with a most complex life.

The religious life, the social, educational and charitable work are always significant signs of parochial activity that should never be omitted even in a booklet that presumes to call itself a historical sketch. Often we come across instances of such life that give us magnificent vistas of what has been accomplished. But when additional vestiges of such activity is sought to make a consecutively told record, the search becomes most elusive. And so the most interesting part, showing the internal life of the parish, is passed over in almost complete silence.

Then there are the host of outstanding parishioners who have given so much of their time and generosity to the parish, the choir, the many assistant pastors, lay brothers and teachers who have labored in silence, whose only documents left to the historian to learn their deeds are the good lives of the boys and girls, men and women whom they have assisted. A chapter or two should be devoted to their work, too. But a silent tribute is often the only one that will be worthy of their heroic labor. If their deeds cannot be put down sufficiently well on paper, they will be recorded better in the memories of those whom they have helped.

All that now remains to say is that St. Francis church has borne its seventy-five years well. It still is a most devotional church visited daily by hundreds of pious people, whose prayers have mellowed its venerable walls. The parish school and community house are functioning well. What the future has in store for the parish is problematical. But there is no reason to doubt that St. Francis church for an indefinite number of years will remain a holy place for the faithful, a monument marking the site of the first Catholic church in Cincinnati, the principal church of the Franciscan Province of St. John the Baptist.

Four Lay Brothers of St. Francis

BROTHER IVO ROTH, O.F.M.

Brother Ivo Roth, O.F.M.

Brother Ivo gave almost all the years of his religious life, from 1875 until 1918, when the Brothers withdrew from the school, to teaching the boys of St. Francis parish. He will also be remembered as the choir director of the boys, as organist and as editor of the *Sodalist*. When, on October 15, 1929, he celebrated the Golden Jubilee of religious life, many of his old pupils, among whom were not a few who had become prominent men in the city, gathered in the evening to show their esteem for their former teacher. Brother Ivo died at Louisville, Kentucky, on July 29, 1930.

Brother Ferdinand Stemann, O.F.M.

Another veteran teacher is Brother Ferdinand, who, of the forty-one years of his teaching career, gave at least thirty-four to the children of St. Francis school. Brother Ferdinand is known also for his interest in boys. For many years he was director of the Junior Sodality, later the Junior Friars, and for the last twelve years has had charge of the altar boys. At present he is also the editor and manager of the *Sodalist*. Brother Ferdinand celebrated his Golden Jubilee in St. Francis church on June 26, 1929.

BROTHER FERDINAND STEMANN, O.F.M.

BROTHER CASSIAN KIRCHENBERGER, O.F.M.

Brother Cassian Kirchenberger, O.F.M.

The decoration of the altars, the care of the vestments and the sacred vessels, the ringing of the bells, the lighting of the candles and all the countless tasks of the sacristy has been the labor of Brother Cassian for twenty-two years in St. Francis church, from 1910-1914, and from 1916 until the present day. No sacristan could have been more prompt and faithful, none more ready to take the endless steps that his work entails.

Brother Benno Lampe, O.F.M.

Probably no one is better known in the parish than Brother Benno, the patient, tireless and genial porter of the monastery. For the past twenty-three years he has answered the door bell, done clerical work and a thousand and one tasks about the monastery. Like St. Francis he is an ardent lover of all living things. His flowers, to which he gives the tenderest care, command widespread attention and are often used on the altars of the church.

BROTHER BENNO LAMPE, O.F.M.

Societies and Organizations of the Parish

St. Francis Men and Young Men Society
Holy Name Society
St. Clare Married Ladies Society
St. Anthony Young Men Relief Society
Immaculata Young Ladies Society
Third Order of St. Francis, St. Louis Fraternity
St. Rose Altar Society
St. Vincent de Paul Society
Holy Family Benevolent Association of Hamilton County
Catholic Order of Foresters, St. Francis Court 1105
Catholic Lady Foresters, Court 715
Parent-Teachers Association
Bon Heur Girls Club
Kolping Society of Cincinnati

Church Committee

Edward Fuchs
Joseph Jordy
Edward Laumann
William Kuhl
Melchior Laemmle
Charles Mahoney
William Miller
Jacob Mueller
George Schlotthauer
Joseph Schroeder
Edward Schulte
Peter C. Zimmerman

Organists and Choir Directors

F. W. Rauch, 1859; Joseph Mandl, 1861; John Fein, 1862; Julius Elsner, 1865; John Eich, 1867; John A. Schehl, 1882; Frank Mahler, 1916.

Roll of Honor

Sons of the Parish
Who Have Entered the Priesthood or Religious Life

Rev. Fr. Leo Molengraft, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Francis X. Buschle, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Gaudence Schuster, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Hugh Staud, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Florentine Meyers, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Antonine Brockhuis, O.F.M.
Very Rev. Fr. Urban Freundt, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Marcellin Schroeder, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Fintan Zumbahlen, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Egbert Fischer, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Marcellus Troester, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Linus Braun, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Alexander Wilberding, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Symphorian Weiner, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Turibius Christmann, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Timothy Brockmann, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Fridolin Schuster, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Osmund Braun, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Alphonse Wilberding, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Matthew Popp, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Caesar Kron, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Ernest Ott, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Ludger Oldegeering, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Fabian Hoerner, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Austin Partl, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Adrian Kohl, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Philip Matuska, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Maximilian Gartner, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Adolph Kirst, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Firmin Oldegeering, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Roland Ulmer, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. John de Deo Oldegeering, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Florence Weiner, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Francis de Paul Holzmeister, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Norbert Oldegeering, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Quentin Hauer, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Pius Kaelin, O.M. Cap.
Rev. Otto Auer
Rev. Louis Abt

Fr. Peter B. Wiethe, O.F.M.
Fr. William Trummer, O.F.M.
Fr. Urban Wiethe, O.F.M.
Bro. Cassian Kirchenberger, O.F.M.
Bro. Lawrence Montag, O.F.M.

Deceased

Rev. Fr. Basil Zieverink, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Nicholas Holtel, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Augustine Bayer, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Maximilian Schaefer, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Otto Ziegler, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Romuald Helmig, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Eusebius Wagner, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Agnellus Rom, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Vincent Trost, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Willibrord Zieverink, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Charles Schoeppner, O.F.M.
Rev. Fr. Chrysostom Jacob, O.M. Cap.
Rev. Martin Auer

Fr. Stephen Kurz, O.F.M.
Fr. Adalbert Huelefeld, O.F.M.
Fr. Sixtus Staud, O.F.M.
Fr. Maximilian Elsbernd, O.F.M.
Fr. Ambrose Frank, O.F.M.
Bro. Bentivol Specht, O.F.M.

Roll of Honor

Daughters of the Parish Who Have Entered Religious Life

Sisters of St. Francis
Oldenburg, Indiana

Sr. Rita Dolores
Sr. Mary Florence
Sr. Dolores
Sr. Antonissa
Sr. Elzeara
Sr. M. Carmela
Sr. Adrian
Sr. Kathleen
Sr. Edward
Sr. Maximilian
Sr. Dorothy
Sr. Juanita
Sr. Francis Edward
Sr. M. Maurice
Sr. Germain
Sr. Arcadia

Sr. Ursula
Sr. Bernard Marie
Sr. Joseph Marie
Sr. M. Jacoba
Sr. Helen Marie
Sr. Devota
Sr. Romain
Sr. Rinildis
Sr. Generose
Sr. Theophane
Sr. Augustine
Sr. Ernestine
Sr. Edith
Sr. Justin
Sr. Quentin
Sr. Cedonia (deceased)

Sisters of St. Francis
Lafayette, Indiana

Sr. Generosine
Sr. Sigismunda
Sr. Paulette

Sr. Geralda
Sr. Dorothea
Sr. Urbana

Sisters of the Precious Blood

Sr. Petronilla
Sr. Pacifica
Sr. Edwardine

Sisters of Loretto

Sr. Vida

Sisters of Charity

Sr. M. Alacoque

Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis

Sr. Solano
Sr. M. Louise

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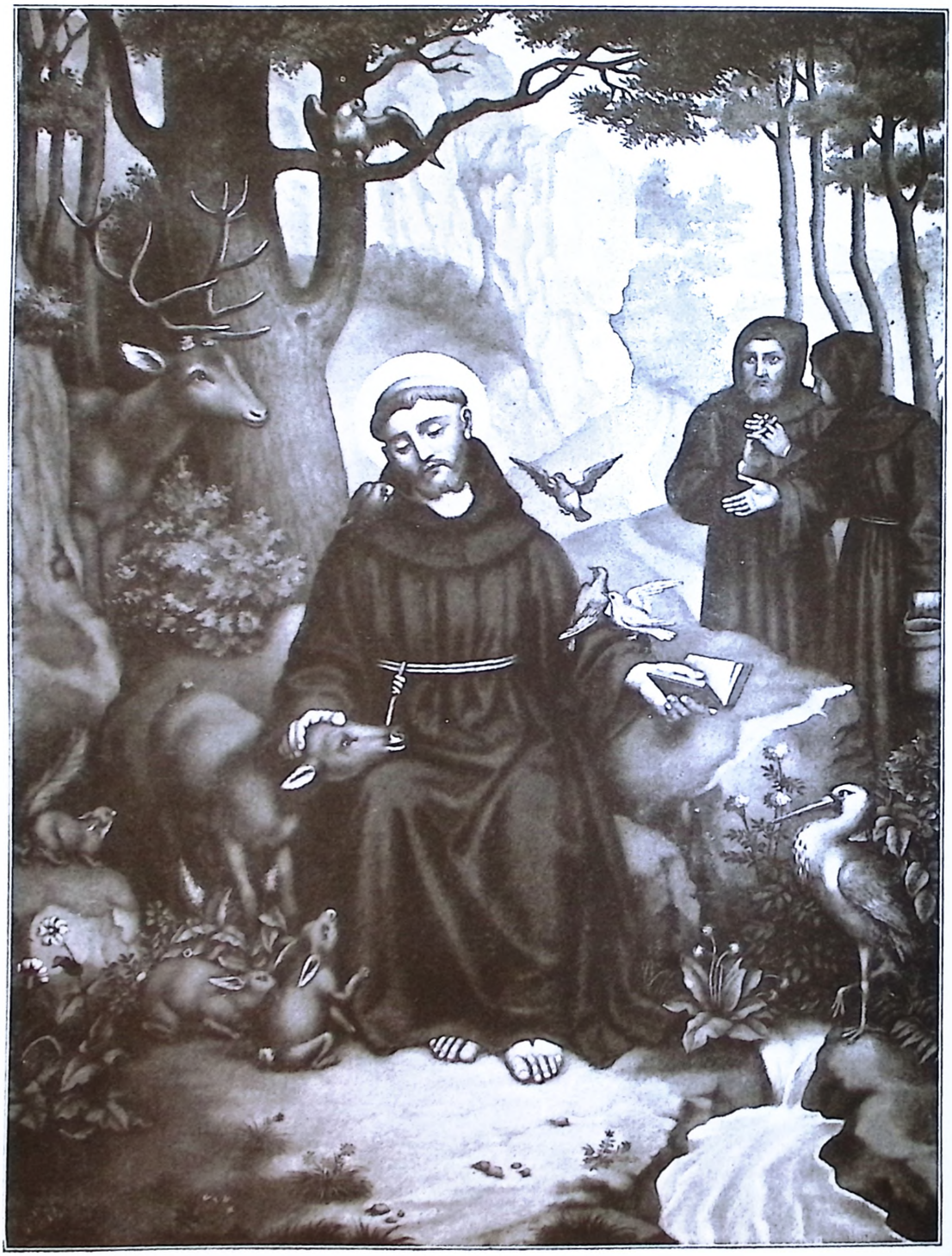
In the compilation of this sketch the following books and periodicals have been most useful: John H. Lamott, *History of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati*, New York and Cincinnati, 1921; V. F. O'Daniel, O.P., *The Right Rev. Edward Dominic Fenwick, O.P.* Washington, 1920; [Maximilian Schaefer, O.F.M. and Bonaventure Hammer, O.F.M.,] *Gedenk-Buch der St. Franziskus Seraphikus Gemeinde in Cincinnati, Ohio*, Cincinnati, 1884; the souvenir booklet published for the Golden Jubilee of the parish in 1909; *Der Wahrheitsfreund*, 1837 ff.; *Katholische Kirchenzeitung*, 1846 ff.; *St. Anthony Messenger*, 1892 ff.; *St. Franziskus Bote*, 1881 ff.; *The Seraph*, 1926 ff.; *The Catholic Telegraph*, 1831 ff.; *The Provincial Chronicle*, 1928 ff.; and many other manuscript sources in the parochial and provincial archives.